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## PRESS OPINIONS—*continued*

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THE  
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OF  
PARIS



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# THE NIGHT SIDE OF PARIS

BY  
EDMUND B. D'AUVERGNE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS SPECIALLY DRAWN FOR THE WORK BY  
HARRY MORLEY

LONDON  
T. WERNER LAURIE  
CLIFFORD'S INN



## PREFACE

IN the following pages I have attempted to do for Paris what Mr Robert Machray has done for London—to sketch the various aspects and phases of the city after dark, to surprise its people during their hours of leisure in all their varying moods. I have described Paris as it appears by night to those who know it intimately and are animated by something of its spirit, not pretending to lay bare any mysteries or to deal with those unpleasant features that are accidental rather than incidental to the life of any great European city.

The pictures are drawn from sketches made on the spot by Mr Harry Morley when in the company of the author.

EDMUND B. D'AUVERGNE.





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# THE NIGHT SIDE OF PARIS

## CHAPTER I

### THE GRAND BOULEVARDS

PARIS has dined. For an hour or more something like calm has reigned over the boulevards. In the kiosk mademoiselle reads her *feuilleton*, and languidly pecks at the meal brought from a neighbouring restaurant; the *camelots*—those tireless vendors of everything that one does not really want—collect in twos or threes, and snatch a moment for conversation from the long routine of the day. There are fewer *voitures* about, for even a *cocher* must dine. But as the clock marks half-past eight, a great sigh of content goes up from the city. Serviettes are thrown aside, and Paris leans back with a profound sense of comfort and repletion. The plutocrat at the Ritz, the bourgeois at Mar-

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guery's, the tramp *chez le Père coupe-toujours*, alike feel the truth of those beautiful lines—

“Fate cannot harm me : I have dined to-day.”

For Paris worships the twin gods, good cheer and pleasure. She has done homage to the one; the other now claims her devotion. It is readily given. Now, says the Parisian, the true business of the day begins. Till now the hours have been spent in preparation.

The workers, all but a few, have gone home. The blinds of the big modistes and costumiers in the Rue de la Paix have been drawn some time, and the swarms of laughing, chattering girls they disgorge nightly have by this time dispersed. Their members at this moment, in trains, 'buses and tramcars, must be drawing near to their homes at Montrouge and Vincennes and Plaisance. Even now the door of the great magasin opens furtively and discreetly at rare intervals, and some belated mannequin or skirt-hand comes forth and trips demurely away. Some are not merely demure—their manner is haughty and disdainful, and specially assumed to repel the advances of the boulevardiers, who would confound them with the *trottins*—“the girls to be picked up”—of the boulevards

## The Grand Boulevards

further east. The princess-like mannequin bandies no words with those who accost her. She does not condescend to reprove them. She ignores them with a completeness, a composure, that can only come from long practice. But all the Mimi Pinsons of Paris are not as austere as she. Alas! they do not all take the shortest road home on leaving "business." Unlike the mannequin who wears her plumage during the day, these other meretricious damsels reserve their finery for the twilight hour. The little *couturière*, who has slight confidence in her own charms, dawdles slowly homewards, hoping that she may meet with an adventure, unsought by her, in the train or on the tram. Her bolder sisters, after a hurried meal at a *crémèrie*, go straight towards the boulevard. Then one morning mamma calls on the head-woman at the workroom and asks if Louise's salary has really been raised, for she often finds gold pieces in her purse, and her boots must have cost at least twenty francs. So we will not inquire too closely into the movements of Louise when she leaves the *atelier*.

The clatter of knife and fork grows faint. Men stroll out on to the *terrasses*, sip coffee and fine champagne, and placidly survey the scene



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before them. It rapidly becomes more animated. The activities of the newsboys and *camelots* are renewed. "*Voici le Soir—la Presse,*" etc., etc. The cries seem prolonged indefinitely along the boulevard. In expectation of fares, cabs—motor and horse-drawn—revolve and revolve in intricate evolutions in front of the big hotels and fashionable restaurants. The theatres all began half an hour ago, at eight, but no one hurries; no one wants to see the curtain-raiser. At the opera it is different. Everyone there is already in his place.

There is indeed no hurry and rush such as is manifest in London in the interval between dinner and theatre. The Londoner knows that four hours remain till midnight to make merry in. The Parisian knows he has the whole night and a good part of the morning. And though the omnibuses fill up at their starting-points at Montparnasse and the Odéon and La Villette early in the evening, there is not that tense excitement, that painful haste, so conspicuous in the town-going trains and public vehicles at the same hour in our city.

There is always the preliminary stroll along the boulevard or the half-hour at the café which can be curtailed if needs be. Pleasure will not

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take a serious form till well past nine. In the meantime we may observe the ever thickening crowd of foot-passengers along the Boulevard des Italiens, some of them bound for some place of amusement, most of them seeking distraction on the boulevard itself. Others, again, like the ladies who just passed us, are in search of profitable adventures. It is a very representative throng. The people do not keep out of sight here, as they do at Piccadilly Circus. Pleasure is not in Paris the prerogative of the rich. For that reason, perhaps, white shirt-fronts and the distinctive uniform of the well-to-do are not very noticeable. Two *vieux marcheurs* pass us on their way perhaps to the Alcazar. They are in evening dress, but they carry walking-sticks, and have the air of men who have not merely strolled out after dinner to smoke a cigar, but who have a serious round of pleasure to get through. They have started in fact on a journey that will lead them up to the *Butte* about two, and will conclude in the cool alleys of the *Bois* with curds and whey about five. Their expression betokens experience and resolution. It commands our respect.

They go westwards, and to pass the time you move in the contrary direction, to find the crowd

## The Night Side of Paris

denser and livelier on the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle. Here every night a fair seems to be in progress. Every few yards you are tempted to enter a music-hall of the inferior sort—a mere “show” in fact; a cinematograph exhibition, a chamber of horrors of the Dupuytren description, (a sort of popular Soane museum). These are all patronised eagerly by the bourgeois, by the respectable workman and his wife or sweetheart. Café concerts there are innumerable. We turn down the Rue Montmartre, and enter the café concert de la Presse. It is a brilliantly-lit, sordid place, distinguished from the ordinary café only by the low platform on the right reserved for the performers. Admission, as usual, is free, but you pay sixty centimes for your first bock. A notice informs you that for subsequent drinks you will be charged twenty centimes less. You look around. The audience is mixed, but mostly of the better sort of working folk. The men have discarded their blouses, but they wear in many cases their ‘flat, peaked caps. The women seem mostly to be their wives—stout, homely dames, scrupulously tidy and neat, innocent of any sort of headgear. A few girls are seated by themselves at the little marble-topped tables. They are reading novels



**At a Fashionable Restaurant.**



## The Grand Boulevards

and newspapers, and pay no heed to the red-nosed *comique* on the platform; they raise their eyes in swift scrutiny of new-comers, and resume their reading. Occasionally they glance at the clock. These quiet, correct young ladies may be described as half-time *cocottes*. Shop assistants and dressmakers by day, they supplement their slender emoluments by serving the god of love by night. Here they pass the interval between the exercise of the two vocations. At eleven o'clock they rise, pay for their *consommations*, and trip westwards. They know that they will find no quarry worth their shafts at the café concert de la Presse. A few well-dressed men look in occasionally it is true; but these are also mere birds of passage, journalists from the adjoining newspaper offices for the most part, waiting to go on the night shift, or come to hunt up some *confrère* or reporter.

The smoke becomes denser, the audience noisier. We return to the street. Through an open door we catch a glimpse of a billiard-saloon. Some of the men have brought ladies with them, who watch the play from side-tables, and mount guard over their friends' glasses. The presence of the sex makes the atmosphere of the place strangely different from what it is with

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us. Why is it that the billiard-saloon should be taboo to womankind, when the bar, the gin-palace, the music-hall and the gaming-tables have so long been free to them? Such questions may occupy your mind as you traverse the dark narrow side-streets and emerge on to the Avenue de l'Opera, the Rue de la Paix, or the Rue de Rivoli—to find them all startlingly deserted as compared with the boulevards a few paces further north.

At the corner of the Faubourg Poissonnière, there is always a small crowd collected before the offices of the *Matin* to watch the linotype pouring out the news for the next morning's consumption. You may anticipate this by reading the telegrams posted up in the next window. They are from all parts of the world—London, St Petersburg, New York, Sydney. News read thus—raw so to speak—gives you a vivid sense of its actuality, and it in no wise diminishes the Parisian's appetite for it served with his coffee and rolls. The same enterprising newspaper exerts itself to provide gratuitous amusement and information for the public. Blériot's aeroplane hung suspended before its doors, while intelligent youths from the Lycées delighted their papas and mammas by their explanations

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of its working and mechanism. We are here in the heart of journalistic Paris. Close by is the Café du Cardinal, affected by pressmen of the higher ranks. A few doors off is Noel Peters, where a goodly number of editors dine, and meet the managers of the leading theatres and music-halls. Another side of newspaper work is revealed in the Rue du Croissant. There, especially towards six o'clock, you find the roadway thronged as densely as Throgmorton Street when "the House" closes, but with ragamuffin *camelots*, fighting and struggling for the evening papers. They are an unceremonious crew, and you stand a good chance of being thrown down or rudely hustled. The scene is not unlike that outside the Bourse in some respects. Some of the middlemen buy up large quantities of the issues, and stand in the middle of the road, shouting out their quotations for the *Presse*, the *Soir* and the *Journal*—in centimes! The bidding is keen, and as soon as the topmost figure is reached, the buyer snatches his sheaf of papers, and rushes madly away with it, remorselessly knocking down anyone who stands in his way.

Most of the promenaders have settled down now in their favourite cafés, whence proceeds an unintermittent hum of conversation, varied by



## The Night Side of Paris

the strains of music. Every second or third café on the grand boulevards has its orchestra. The waiters fly to and fro amid the throng with alertness pleasant to watch. In one corner of the room a family party is playing cards; in another two typical men-about-town are throwing dice. Experienced gamblers these, it is plain, for it is impossible to tell by their expressions or gestures which is the winner or the loser. At another table monsieur is attending to his correspondence—the ink provided by the establishment is violet and well watered, the nib is broken, but monsieur can collect his thoughts better in this familiar atmosphere than at home. Beneath the awnings couples sit in earnest converse. Madame frequently emphasises her remarks with pats and caresses, to which her companion seems supremely indifferent. He is absorbed, like the rest, in the contemplation of the ever-shifting panorama of the boulevard, for half of Paris defiles before the cafés night after night to entertain the other half.

The procession is reinforced after eleven by the small shopkeepers who have put up their shutters and come with their lawful spouses to take the air like the rest of the world. Presently they brush against the advanced

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guard of the army of Venus, which, regular and irregular, is now about to take the field. But the bourgeois is not censorious; nor is madame. True Parisians both of them, they could no more conceive a city without *cocottes* than without dogs and horses. The *fille de joie* is a recognised member of the social organisation like themselves. One result of this tolerant attitude at once strikes the Londoner. With us the courtesan wears a sinister, hard, and wolfish look. She is made to feel she is an Ishmaelite, and she gives back scowl for scowl. That expression is not often seen on the faces of her Parisian sister. She has no quarrel with the world around her, nor has the world with her. She peeps into your face appealingly, archly, naughtily, merrily—never hardly or greedily. Those of the irregulars who keep the field on the grand boulevards at this relatively late hour, walk demure and pensive. They hardly look at you; when you look at them you catch their response only in the corner of their downcast eyes. They do not laugh affectedly as do our amateurs, and glance back, half-derisively, half-provokingly, till you have reached the end of the street. The young girl with her hair on her shoulders, so conspicuous in our streets, is here equally conspicuous by her

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absence. Love-making in Paris is a profession, an industry, or a vocation; it is approached, when all is said and done, with some dignity—you see little or none of the awkward shame-faced clowning and larking that Englishwomen of the lower class think part of the game.

I don't think a Parisian would deny that the courtesan is the most conspicuous type in his city. She plays therein a part as large as she played at Corinth, and were it not for the nations standing by, she would, I believe, be accorded the same rank she held in that far-famed city. As it is, she can hardly be called *déclassée*. She belongs to a society with a sharply defined hierarchy, and the gulf that separates the woman of the boulevards from the *demi-mondaine* of the Elysée Palace and the Ritz, is wider than that which exists between the latter and the *grande dame*. Indeed, the days when the *grande dame* was supremely anxious to be distinguished outwardly from Phryne have gone by in Paris, at all events. Possibly in England also. An English lady hesitated once when we were about to enter a restaurant frequented by the women of the *haute noce*. "Nonsense," I remonstrated, "anyone can see at a glance you are not one of

## The Grand Boulevards

them.” “That’s it,” was the unexpected reply. “We will come another time when I don’t look quite so much unlike them.”

The middle class of the *demi-monde* includes at least three distinct local types—the grisette of the Quartier, the Montmartroise, and the woman of the grand boulevards. It is the latter class that with most difficulty escapes the dreaded recognition of the police. The authorities are aided by the women’s jealousies. The regular *habituées* fiercely resent the competition of irregulars and amateurs, and make efficient detectives. From this class the night walkers of Regent Street and the Circus are mainly recruited. London demoralises them utterly. Question any one of these girls, and the story is always the same. She began life as a servant on a farm or in a village; her master or a fellow-servant took advantage of her; she got another situation in the neighbouring town. The same accident occurred; possibly she became a mother, possibly she felt her character was irretrievably lost; she came to Paris. Not always without the hope of returning. Sometimes there is a worthy carpenter or journeyman awaiting her at her native place. She is earning her *dot* here on the boulevards. In New York

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I once met a girl from Toulon, who told me she had already saved three thousand dollars; by close application to business she hoped to save another thousand within the year. "*Et puis?*" I asked. "Then, monsieur, I return to my country to marry the man who is waiting for me." If Japan has learnt something from us, it seems that in this matter we cannot learn much from Japan.

This is a different thing of course from earning money for a bully. The women of the grand boulevards is above that in most cases. Oddly enough, the English *cocotte*, true to the commercial instincts of her race, despises her Continental sister precisely because she suspects her of working partly for others' sake. "I'm on my own!" the Strand-bred girl proudly assures you. Devotion to business, she feels, is the best excuse for a moral lapse in a great commercial community.

All these people—*cocottes*, bourgeois, and what not—are waiting for the theatres and the music-halls to empty. Whereas the theatre here, as everywhere else, is an institution distinct and impossible to confound with anything else, the music-halls of Paris shade off and develop from the cafés concerts and the *cabarets* in almost

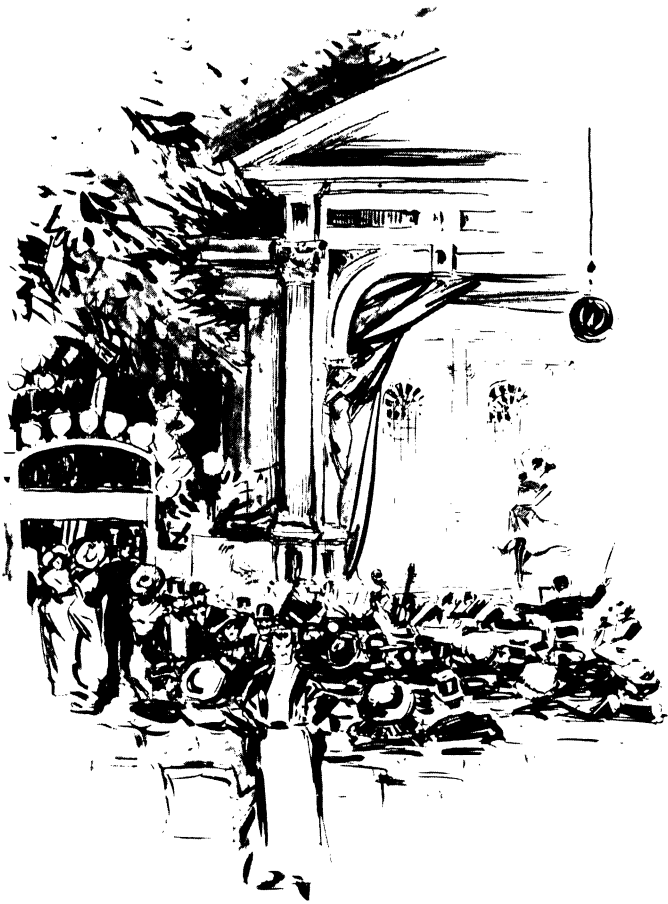
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imperceptible transition. It was the same with us in Thackeray's day. To-day, however, the halls, as in London, tend more and more to take on a distinct character of their own. The Olympia and the Folies Bergères, not to mention at least half-a-dozen others, have certainly "arrived." The Olympia will, I think, be remembered by most of its visitors as the most brilliantly illuminated place they have ever seen. There is an orgy of light in the vast hall that you enter almost as you cross the threshold. This proximity of the promenade to the street is a rather startling and pleasing feature of most of the Parisian music-halls. The place is so spacious and richly carpeted, the promenade so unencumbered with superfluous furniture, the whole so airy and light, that oddly enough one is reminded of certain of the newer and larger mosques. I do not know who designed the Olympia, but I venture to compliment him on his achievement. The place is, of course, quite unlike an English music-hall. You are not boxed in; you are not for ever tumbling over your neighbour's legs and upsetting his glass. The space immediately in front of the stage is encircled by the *loges*—those little open pens, dear to the Continental playgoer, that allow you

## The Night Side of Paris

room to stretch your limbs, if they do not afford the privacy of our private box. The Olympia is not one of the popular halls. Admission to the promenade costs three francs. Even in the brief passage from the door you are pounced upon by a goblin selling programmes, who, mark well, untravelled Saxon! expects a *pourboire*, and will ask for it, and by one of those witch-like old women, who never drop out of the running in France. Ugly age in England is kept out of sight as much as possible—gaiety will be ministered to only by youth. But the old woman is a power in France. Where the fun waxes most fast and furious, where love twines arms with beauty, age in a black bonnet and rusty gown querulously demands a toll.

As you lean over the low partition dividing you from the *loges*, it seems to you that most of the occupants of these places are foreigners, or at least strangers to Paris. The American tongue is here heard in its greatest purity. There are some Americans also “sitting around” in the promenade. Their women watch the scene with rustic wonderment. The glittering, graceful courtesans that wander listlessly about especially attract their curiosity and interest. They glance from them suspici-



At the Ambassadeurs'.





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ously at Silas, who appears to be absorbed in the *revue* going forward, of which he doesn't understand a word or an allusion. Mrs Silas looks with disapproval on "the bad women," and wishes that she looked more like them. She resolves to order a frock just like the one that wicked woman in blue is wearing, if she can induce Silas to go with her to Doeuillet's next day. There are unattached American gentlemen strolling about also; they, too, stare at the girls, and would evidently like to speak to them, if they only knew how. Decidedly, Don Juan gets less direct encouragement here than *outré manche*, because when he is French he doesn't need it. The Englishman knows his way through these dark if pleasant alleys of experience better than his transatlantic cousin. Still, love speaks all languages, and you presently see the shy, dyspeptic young gentleman from "up-state" seated at a table ordering drinks with reckless prodigality for a delightful little lady whose hat forms a sort of summer-house for both.

The ladies in the *loges*, some of them in very daring *décolleté*—most of them, as I have said, foreigners—are altogether bolder and more dashing in their manner than the *cocottes*. Possibly they feel they are on their mettle, and

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they challenge comparison with their "outcast" sisters. Possibly a few of them in years gone by have also strayed in search of adventure to and fro across the *promenoir*, before they met with a permanent guardian and admirer. No such suspicion, of course, attaches to the daringly-dressed American girl, bent on seeing life and having a good time, who has come here from the Elysée Palace with a fat German count who adores her, and an austere English officer who bores her.

The American and the *demi-mondaine* are the most conspicuous patrons of the Olympia, and indeed of most of the high-class Parisian music-halls. The management prints its programmes in French and English, and the *revues* are full of allusions calculated to interest the citizens of the United States. The Spaniards now, as for a good many years past, also seem to come in for a good share of consideration. Spanish dancers of the Belle Otero type are introduced into every performance on the most trifling pretext. At the time of the Spanish-American war, the music-hall audiences went solid for Spain. The Americans who visited the Folies Bergères about that time, I recollect, used to look sheepish and uncomfortable. Restraint

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is not a quality usually admired in a dancer by the Parisian public, but it was forgiven and applauded in a beautiful Spanish girl at the Folies. "*Voilà, une femme qui se respecte!*" exclaimed a *vieux marcheur* (I think they were called that as far back as 1898); he would have hissed such an indecent display of decorum in one of his own countrywomen. The Folies Bergères is supposed to be a trifle less "fast" than the Olympia, but it would require a very nicely regulated stop-watch to determine the difference in the pace. Not that to one accustomed to the promenades of fashionable music-halls in any part of Europe, there is anything startling or shocking at either place. The French refer with bated breath to the Taverne de l'Olympia, the bar under the first-named hall. Practically all the members of the audience who are not in attendance upon their women-relatives resort thither after the performance. The most wonderful white slave-market in Europe, a Parisian writer calls the Taverne. To the strains of an excellent band, you drink your bock or your coffee, and survey an unending procession of fine ladies, some of whom may quite quietly and politely ask you from time to time to offer them some refresh-

## The Night Side of Paris

ment. Some of these women are gorgeously and most becomingly gowned. Few of them are really beautiful—for real beauty is soon snapped up by some wealthy connoisseur and withdrawn from the market, but nearly all have, it is hardly necessary to say, more than the average allowance of good looks. The girlish, innocent expression you may have noticed on the boulevard often greets you here. Side by side with such faces, you will also see a few coarse and even repulsive types, and the luxuriance of some of the figures is more grotesque than attractive. There is practically no accosting, though as a young Englishman passes the bar, he is good-humouredly chaffed, and his coat-tails plucked by a jolly-looking girl. At one table two provincials are entertaining a young lady whose acquaintance they have evidently made quite recently, but not here. She tells them that the ladies at the Olympia are *méchante*, and that their one aim is to go through the pockets of their admirers for the time being. They are different, quite different, she emphatically assures them, from the girls of Montmartre. Probably she comes from that abode of love and jollity herself. The provincials pay evident heed to her words. Frenchmen and Americans do not like to waste

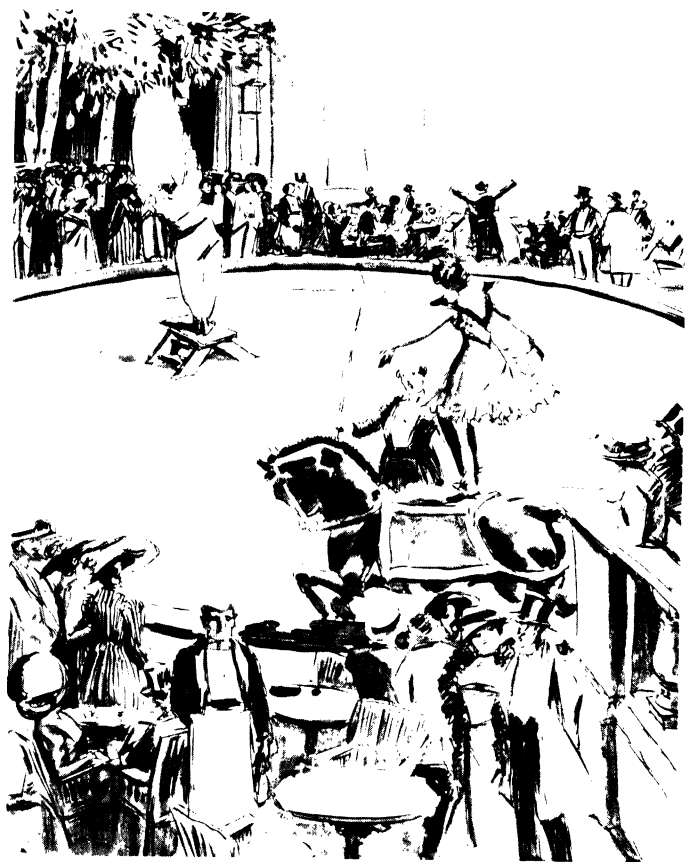
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money even over their pleasures. We may rest assured that these two gentlemen from the departments will remain proof against the blandishments of the houris of the Taverne. While listening (very improperly) to this conversation, you will almost unconsciously have been helping yourself to the crisp potato "chips" set before you by the waiter. You marvel at the liberality of the management, till the raging thirst excited by the savoury delicacies causes you to clamour for another bock.

In fine weather (and this does not mean, as with us, half-a-dozen times a year), the Jardin de Paris forms a more agreeable and more typically Parisian resort. It is situated on the south side of the Avenue des Champs Elysées. Considering the relatively high price of admission—five francs—you will be a little surprised at the bourgeois aspect of many of the frequenters. In England the notice—"Admission, four shillings" would ensure a much more "select" audience. The Jardin has replaced the far-famed Mabilles, of which old-stagers still talk regretfully. Entering, you find yourself in a gravelled garden about the size of the middle court at Earl's Court, with a stage on the right, and a good number of chairs and tables disposed in front of

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it. In the centre is a bandstand on a raised terrace. Beyond this is the usual bar and restaurant. If you arrive as early as nine, you can find nothing more interesting to do than to watch the performance. This is really good of its kind, and the kind is the variety entertainment. There are vocalists and comic singers, acrobats and dancers, and the inevitable cinematograph. A Spanish dancer is succeeded by a gaily-dressed troupe of girls, none of them above seventeen years of age, whose thin, Cockney voices proclaim their nationality. They sing an incredibly stupid and inane ditty, but this does not matter, as the French do not understand it, and the English and Americans are eyeing the *demi-mondaines*, who are beginning to drop in. So far the whole entertainment could not have been objected to by the licensing committee of the London County Council. An interval is announced, and you stroll with the others round the bandstand. Beneath it you descend to a bowling alley. Bowls is a popular if not a fashionable pastime in France. There is a bowling academy in the Rue St Petersburg. Your attention is distracted by a lady draped à la Burne-Jones, who invites you to see the Poses Plastiques. You enter on payment of a



At the Jardin de Paris.





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franc. The tableaux are of the usual description. Well-shaped women, their nudity hardly concealed by skin-tight garments, are disposed in various attitudes, suggestive of Spring, the Dawn, and similar subjects. The tableaux are in perfectly good taste, and are witnessed with admiration by ladies of the better sort, who have paid their francs especially to see the show, and are here in two and threes, while their menfolk play at bowls outside. It is difficult to understand why these exhibitions attract Parisians at all. By carrying a sketch-book, and paying fifty centimes, you may obtain admission to any of the *croquis* life classes held from four to seven in the afternoon in numerous studios in the Latin Quarter and at Montmartre. There you may see handsomer women much more artistically posed than at any place of amusement, but the atmosphere of the studio is probably too artistic for the taste of the *habitué* of the Jardin de Paris. The next item on the programme is more to his liking. Four richly dressed women walk on to the terrace, and lay aside their furs and mantles, chattering to each other gaily the while. They are physically as unlike each other as four women could be. They are probably selected on this account, so

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as to please all tastes. One is majestic and Juno-like, another *d'une maigreur exquise*; in a third we recognise the opulent proportions of the lady at the Olympia; the fourth is *coquette* and *mignonne*. They all wear hats amazingly and delightfully big. The band strikes up a new tune. With a bound the four are in the centre of the terrace, and the next moment a whirling display of snowy lingerie and openwork stockings proclaims them to be the true successors of La Goulue, one of the now famous *quadrilles excentriques*. They dance with astounding vigour. They seem intoxicated with their own vitality. They talk at each other volubly all the time; they kick, they plunge, they spin, they leap, they twirl, with a vivacity more animal than human. Their faces seem to betoken the keenest enjoyment. If this be simulated, then it is the art that conceals art. Each vies with the other in the display of fine underlinen. One is reminded of a "white sale" at one of our big haberdashers. The cult of the tempestuous petticoat deserves to rank among the sects of the day. How amazed would be those who first swathed their limbs to keep them warm to find that the homely garments they devised have become the objects of a curiosity

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and adoration fiercer than for the human form itself; that the veils designed by modesty have served to put a new edge on blunted sensuality. The new edge soon wears away, it is true. A glance at the faces of the white-shirted, opera-hatted men standing by satisfies you that this frank revelation of the inner mysteries of my lady's toilette no longer whets their jaded appetites. For them the management has provided an entertainment more piquant. Simultaneously with the Frenchwomen, four English girls have mounted the terrace and go through their quadrille on the other side of the bandstand. They are pretty, fresh-looking types of our girlhood, with that boyish expression and slight crudeness of line that is in such marked contrast with the sensuous femininity of the Frenchwomen. They are dressed in simple white frocks of the material called holland (I believe), and wear equally simple but very large white hats. They go through their quadrille with a restraint and composure reminding one of the "half-crown hops" at Kensington Town-hall. The men crowding round grow impatient with this reserve. They ask why the English girls don't lift their skirts higher. If they did, my French friend, you would be as

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little interested in them as in your countrywomen on the other side of the terrace. Certainly the English girls leave a good deal to the imagination. For all their high kicking and capering, a glimpse of tan stocking and red garter is all that rewards the greedy stare of the onlookers. There is an inwardness in the two styles of dancing if you care to seek for it. The Frenchwoman dances as she loves, with whole-hearted, self-abasing abandonment; she gives herself to man with all her heart. The Englishwoman dances as she loves (they call it love, as an author assured us); she gives as little as she can, beckons the man on, withholds from him all she can, plays with him as the angler does with a fish. If the English girl had the skill, what a coquette she could be! Luckily, in 999 cases out of 1000 her capacity is not equal to her ambition. Too often she spreads the net in sight of the bird; often the bird wearies of beating its wings in vain against a stony wall of reserve.

Such is the fate reserved for the *blasé*-looking gentleman in the overcoat of Savile Row cut, who, in indifferent English, woos the fair *Anglaises*. It is not to be doubted that he makes the most liberal proposals, nor that he

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makes them and means them kindly and good-naturedly. Our countrywomen are deaf to his entreaties, and he retires puzzled and disappointed, feeling, no doubt, that he is a good fellow rebuffed. The English visitor sees in this a picture of Innocence rebuking Vice, and regards the gentleman as an abandoned and heartless *roué*. He is no such thing. He is no more a criminal—at least he does not feel himself to be more so—than the young spark who chucks the barmaid under the chin, or kisses the pretty housemaid on the stairs.

There are, of course, English and American ladies among the spectators at the Jardin. A few of these are sufficiently unconventional to allow themselves to be scandalised by what is passing. These Early Victorian notions and poses have an old-world freshness and quaintness altogether charming. The less-advanced women painfully attempt to appear unsurprised and sympathetic. They stare at the Sisters Goulue, and criticise their lingerie with the air of experts—which they may be. These old-fashioned English people make laborious efforts to appear at their ease in Paris. They do not understand that to be fashionable you must live in a world of reaction. With the revival of

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twelfth-century notions in politics and religion, we look for the reappearance of dear old Mrs Grundy, leaning on the arm of the big-teethed, knickerbockered, check-suited English tourist, immortalised by Caran d'Ache.

"Ramassez-vous!" gruffly shouts an attendant to a couple dallying in the shadow. The entertainment is over. The English dancers disappear so surreptitiously as almost to suggest deliberate secrecy. The Sisters Goulue throw on their wraps, wave adieux to their friends among the audience (of whom they have many), and pass out into the cool, fragrant avenue. They do not seek to avoid notice. Two of them walk away together; you see a third—not unaccompanied—driving off in an *auto*.

You stroll back to the boulevards. The theatres and music-halls are emptying their audiences. The bourgeois who have turned out to see the sight gaze critically at the beshawled ladies, who dash across the broad pavements and spring into the motors, carriages, and cabs.

The signal for the exodus from the opera is the appearance of two mounted men of the *Garde républicaine*, who station themselves side by side, facing Garnier's splendid façade. The same corps keep order within the building. Presently

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the crowd comes streaming out. If the façade were better illuminated, we could appreciate the pretty faces and exquisite toilettes better. Still the sight is a pretty one, and is enhanced by the number of little girls, dressed nowadays very much *à l'Anglaise*. The concourse of vehicles is by no means as considerable as outside the London theatres, and the number of private carriages conspicuously less. Cab-touts and newspaper vendors push rudely through the crowd, not hesitating to insult the most respectably dressed persons. And notwithstanding their services, ladies have to traverse the wide place often enough in search of a conveyance. On a rainy night the Parisian—a connoisseur in such matters—stations himself at a convenient corner to observe them as they rush across, holding their skirts high above their ankles. Outside Vetzels and the Café de la Paix, the Parisienne is observing *him*, and on such occasions he frequently falls a victim to her fascinations. About half an hour later, if you stroll round to the back of the great building, you will see a number of men in evening dress awaiting the exit of the artistes and ballet girls. A stylishly-gowned lady issues forth, bows frigidly to three gentlemen, steps into a cab, and is



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driven down the Rue Auber. The gentlemen look one at the other, mutter " Dame! " and walk ruefully away. Other ladies are met by friends, most of them seem to drive away alone. Presently the junior members of the staff emerge—quite young girls, some of them rather reminding one of the young ladies you see in the mornings in Kensington High Street. The exaggerated type of theatre girl is not often seen here. The girls come out in twos and threes, and whatever love affairs they may have, seem to be discreetly conducted, for evidently very few assignations are at the stage-door. The two fair-bearded men who raise their hats to all the girls in succession and speak to none, we take to be connected with the management. One young fellow in a straw hat touches one of the *coryphées* on the arm. She looks round, seems a little frightened, hesitates, then leaves her companion and exchanges a few words with the man. His manner becomes excited; at moments he seems to glance from the girl to the fair-bearded gentlemen; suddenly the girl leaps into a cab—which seems to have been awaiting this *dénouement*—calls to her companion, " Tu viens, Berthe? " and you see the two drive away together. The young man walks down past the

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opera, talking to himself as many Frenchmen do when excited, and occasionally making vicious cuts at the air with his cane. Pierrette has thrown overboard Pierrot.

The stream of traffic flows mostly towards the fashionable residential quarters of the north-west. Farther east at the Châtelet it is cabs rather than private conveyances that carry off the theatre-goers. *Camelots* and street-urchins reap a harvest of coppers. Miserable-looking men nudge the elbows of foreigners and offer to show them the "sights" of the city. One of them has made a mistake—a Frenchman turns angrily upon him, and he slinks away, inwardly cursing the tendency of his countrymen to dress like Englishmen. There is a rush for the cafés. The tables are besieged; it is the busiest hour in the waiter's day. For the fair adventuresses of the boulevard this is the psychical moment. They greet old acquaintances eagerly and affectionately—a whispered word, a shake of the head, and they go on—in search of fresh acquaintances. The hum of conversation in the cafés rises almost to a roar. Everybody is in high spirits, and all the men seem to be talking at the same time. At the street corners the dwellers in the suburbs are waiting for their

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omnibuses. A young fellow eyes a demure little *coulourière*, hesitates, detects a sly response in her eye, raises his hat, and approaches her. They find they are both going the same way, but there is time for a bock,—and they lose the last 'bus. No matter—since they are going in the same direction, it will be pleasanter to cab it. A party of students are in the same plight. No cabs for them! They set out sturdily on foot for the distant Boule Miche, breaking into song as they traverse the Place du Carrousel, and making mock demonstrations before the monument of Gambetta.

For the professional pleasure-seeker the night has only begun. The red lights of Maxim's shine like a beacon in a naughty world (which they are). Americans and English thrill with delight at the Mephistophelian aspect of the place. Every second man that pushes in round the revolving door speaks our tongue. Inside, he finds himself in a well-lit but not particularly handsome restaurant, with a bar near the door and a raised alcove at the far end. The atmosphere of the place savours at once of our Continental and of Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday. It has become largely a show place, but it is incorrect to assert that it has no

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place in the life of Paris. The gorgeous *demi-mondaines* at the bar are evidently very much at home here; the typical *vieux marcheurs*, who with gloomy indifference to the surroundings occupy themselves with dice, are evidently no strangers. These men are probably passing the time more pleasantly than the young fellows at the next table, who are making frantic and obviously painful efforts to be gay. The faces of some are worn and haggard, most likely because they are very sleepy. There is a girl with them. Her eyes wander from table to table, and she is clearly much more interested in the other women present than in her companions. The gentlemen have bought her company for the time being, and she is here simply on duty so to speak. So also are the three ladies opposite, who came in alone, but have found a youth ready to pay for their champagne. He has ordered supper, moreover, and between the courses the party beat a lively tattoo with their knives and forks, varied by a fusillade of bread pellets. But these girls also forget their entertainer at moments, and earnestly discuss business prospects together. The young fellow presently gets sulky. One of his companions thereupon leaves him and joins a man at

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another table. However, he is not left unconsolated, for the two others fondle him, and he sits with an arm round each, while one of them kisses him slowly and deliberately. No one pays any attention to these demonstrations of affection. Two quiet American ladies, who have evidently dropped in out of curiosity, make their way out. A "gentleman" calls out to them in ludicrously bad English, sarcastically beseeching them "to come 'ere, as he loves ze ladies." The strangers smile and pass out into the night. It must be admitted that good breeding is often a thin cloak that the French gentleman leaves behind him when he goes out to enjoy himself.

The regular frequenters of Maxim's may be distinguished at once from the occasional visitors. They eat their daintily-cooked suppers as quietly and composedly as if they were at the Tour d'Argent or Marguery's. They appear wholly oblivious of the affected gaiety around them, and the women leave them alone, knowing that they are waiting for their particular friends. Maxim's is not a very comfortable restaurant. Between one and two in the morning, it is so crowded that you have to sit penned in behind tables, between which no one can pass. A



A Row at Maxim's.



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foreigner thus awkwardly placed politely asks the man opposite him to move, so that he can push aside the table and get out. The gay Frenchman rudely declines to do so, and invites the stranger to push if he likes. The stranger does so, and the Frenchman to save himself from falling, grabs the tablecloth and brings a bucket of champagne with a crash to the floor. No one is startled. The *chahut* is part of the entertainment. A woman leaves a man with whom she is dining, and kisses another man opposite. There is an ugly look on the first man's face—a row seems imminent. But the woman kisses him too, and order is restored. The women understand the men with whom they have to deal.

When the crowd thins out, the tables are pushed aside, and the middle of the room is given up to dancing. The *cocottes* dance more often together than with male partners, possibly because the latter do not care to dance, more probably because they wish to show off their charms without delay. The display of silk stocking and lace is extremely liberal.

As a rendezvous of the *haute nocte*, Maxim's hardly ranks with the Café Américain on the Boulevard des Capucines. The company here



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is more select, the supper takers, ladies and gentlemen, a trifle—if only a trifle—more elegant and more restrained. Perhaps this is due to the subtle influence of environment, for the *Café Américain* is really very tastefully fitted up, and the dining-room on the first floor is beautifully decorated. On the famous *escalier de soie* you meet women fair enough to seduce a member of the Vigilance Society; and there is something in the rustle of the rich silks and satins, and in the gleam of the white shoulders to put an edge on to the most jaded appetite for pleasure. Sylvain's has a different reputation. The *grande dame* dines there with her lover, and the *petite femme* whose favours are reserved for the very few, goes there with the *grande dame's* husband. This is, in fact, one of the places a Parisian speaks of as *écoles de l'adultère*. But everything is most discreet.

Vetzel's, on the other hand, in the Rue Auber, looking across at the Opera, ranks several grades lower than the red-litten hostelry of the Rue Royale. In the evening it is quiet enough, but about two in the morning it becomes one of the last refuges of the *demi-mondaines*. They flock in, tired and hungry, and clamour for milk and hard-boiled eggs. These are the staples of

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these ladies' diet. Their hunger appeased, they scan the rest of the company, in the hope of interesting some weary *noceur* even at this late hour. The men are drinking beer, and look tired and sulky. Still here and there one is coaxed into a smile by some indefatigable priestess of love, who sits beside him, surveys him sympathetically, and presently inquires: "Vous ne vous embêtez pas, tout seul, monsieur?" If monsieur responds to this kindly lead, he will presently find himself called to settle an account for two bocks, one crème de menthe, three coffees, four glasses of hot milk and half-a-dozen hard-boiled eggs. In fact he gets off cheaply with that little dose, for it is likely enough that mademoiselle has espied a friend all alone at another table and has invited her to join her at his table. Everything is very free and easy *chez* Vetzels, as indeed it is at most of the *brasseries*. When beer became the Parisian's favourite drink he lost his polish.

Ten years ago everyone predicted that the café was doomed. If by a café you mean a place where people assemble to drink coffee, the prediction has been verified. But the place and its frequenters remain the same, though they have changed their drink. *Brasseries* are

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now supplemented to an enormous extent by bars, where you take your drinks at the counter after the English fashion. These places remind one of the American saloons rather than of the English public-houses, which happily has found imitators only in our colonies. The Cafés Biard have become quite a feature in Paris. They are really bars, where the principal drinks seem to be hot milk and coffee at a penny a glass. They take the place in some quarters of our coffee-stalls.

On summer nights the *haute noce* prefers the leafy pleasaunces of the Bois. The famous restaurants of Armenonville and Madrid are in the season among the ultra-fashionable resorts of the French capital. The Madrid was an old château, not fitted up with any great degree of splendour or comfort, but living on its reputation as one of the two or three most select dining places in or around Paris. I say "was," because the Madrid is at the moment in the course of demolition. On its site is to be built a new and glorified edition of the old restaurant, more in keeping, perhaps, with the rather vulgar tastes of present-day society. Not that the frequenters of the Madrid are vulgar. Far from it. They belong to the French aristocracy of

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*vieille souche*, to whom a certain dignity still clings—the set who don't precisely welcome the American or the Transvaal millionaire. The stranger straying inadvertently into the restaurant finds himself very much in the cold, and will be annoyed to find that he has to pay a very high price all the same.

The smart set (if it still exists, since the journalists forgot to talk about it) would be more in its element at Armenonville, which is resplendent on a summer's night with fair women and fat men in shirt-fronts. There are diamonds here, and a surfeit of champagne which would delight a retired pugilist or licensed victualler. The Yank is here—or perhaps I should say that fine old Southern gentleman of the Virginian or Georgian *noblesse*, whom we now meet so often (except in America), and the Baron Moïse de Diamondstein, whose horse won the Oaks (or the Grand Prix, was it?) last year. These ample and opulent persons are in attendance upon the aristocracy of the *demi-monde*, whose automobiles are snorting and bubbling behind the restaurant buildings. There are quite a decent sort of people at Armenonville, also people whom you would rather expect to meet at the Madrid. It is Maxim's in the woodland. The

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scene is a pretty one: the white cloths, the flowers, the coloured lamps, and the mellow tinted wines sparkling in the glasses; the graceful, gorgeously apparelled women, the uniforms of the bandsmen, the black coats of the diners occasionally relieved by the blue tunic of an officer. Here fashionable Paris gets away from the people—or thinks she does. For outside that circle of light and luxury eyes are watching the scene—the cruel, wolfish, hungry eyes of tramps and apaches, the wistful eyes of the model from the Quartier clinging to the arm of her student-lover, the eyes occasionally of a Cook's tourist, wondering whether it would be safe to venture into that aristocratic crowd and, sitting at a table, to order a small Bass.

No, it would not be safe. He had better go instead to the Chalet-restaurant du Touring Club, where jerseyed cyclists discuss *bécanes* and the merits of *pneus* with pretty girls in socks and bloomers. The cycling girl is, however, rapidly becoming extinct in Paris—especially the bloomed variety. It may be fancy, but it has always seemed to me that as soon as a Frenchman mounts a bicycle he puts on a swagger—a swagger quite unlike the dejected “humble-folk-are-we” air of his English fellow. The *habitués*

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of the Chalet du Touring Club, even if they have ridden only from the Ternes or Batignolles look around them with the detached critical air of travellers. They talk loudly yet confidentially to each other, and make merry over the habits of this strange region they have condescended to visit. They have other little ways very irritating to sensible people. For instance, they will persist in using paper lanterns instead of metal lamps—a practice which sets the art of bicycling in a frivolous and fantastical light. I have a suspicion that their mounts are never properly adjusted; some, I suspect, to be home-made. But peace be with the French cyclist! The motor-car is driving him from the country roads, as the *cocher* has driven him, after a desperate fight, from the streets of the capital.

If returning home, footsore and weary, after an exhausting evening at Maxim's or Montmartre, you are in ill temper (as I wager you will be), and feel that it would do you good to curse someone, do not hesitate—there is one near at hand whose guilt and fathomless villainy merit the execrations and anathemas of all mankind. Curse him by the beard of his father, curse him and his descendants to the third and fourth generation, learn by heart and launch at

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him in several languages that magnificent curse set forth in *Tristram Shandy*—he deserves it and more. Needless to say, I refer to the Parisian *cocher*. Has anyone ever heard a word said in his favour? He is extortionate, stupid and rude. His cab constantly overturns, he loses his way. On a rainy day he sees a bourgeois and his wife beckoning frantically from beneath the arcade of the Rue de Rivoli. He looks another way. He recognises the bourgeois as a *faubourien*—let him be drenched! He will not rattle his wretched fiacre to Montrouge or Vincennes for ten centimes *pourboire*. The bourgeois insists, perhaps, and cabby has ample revenge. He takes care that his cab overturns twice at least, that the journey consumes three hours, that the rain penetrates through the hood. At night he retires into his crazy vehicle, and remains deaf to the entreaties and threats of would-be fares. At last he comes out, growling and muttering, and no sooner are monsieur and madame ensconced within, than they find the interior has been made uninhabitable by foul tobacco smoke and the remains of cabby's meals. Nor has the introduction of the taximeter put an end to his extortion. "Price to pay according to distance, 1.60; baggage, 25 cents." True, but the "supplé-

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ment, monsieur?" Twice you stopped the cab to ask the way which your driver didn't know; the delay must have amounted to twenty minutes. "Mais oui, monsieur, mais oui." "Well, be d——d to you, here's a five-franc piece. Give me two francs' change, and let us finish with you." Cabby hunts in his purse. Of course, he has no change. You insist. He gives you a franc in coppers and a half-franc piece. He at once drives off, howling back at you some unintelligible insult in argot. You shake your umbrella at him, and give the hotel porter the half-franc piece. He returns it to you with a respectful but reproachful manner. It's an Argentine coin!

No journalist has ever dared to draw the *cocher* into conversation; yet it seems to me he ought to have some strange tales to tell. The oddest things are left behind in Parisian cabs, and are never claimed by the owners. A woman's corset is found at least once a week. Sometimes a sabre; occasionally a set of false teeth. Sometimes a carriage and pair has been found derelict, and never claimed.

It is to the malpractices of the Parisian cabman that we owe, perhaps, the appearance of the cabwoman. You can see her generally in the



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Rue de la Paix or the Avenue de l'Opera. She is well patronised. May her tribe increase!

Do not imagine that the lively folk who have left Maxim's at half-past one have gone home. The night is not to be wasted in slumber. When the silence of the great boulevards begins to weigh upon the spirits even of the regular *noctambule*, he remembers—not sweet Argos—but merry Montmartre. The Parisian rake loves to *s'encanailler*. He could do this, you might suppose, thoroughly enough in the Rue Royale, but at the “Butte,” he has the additional satisfaction of knowing that he is cheek-by-jowl with downright rascality, and with bacchanalianism of the lowest type. His destination is the well-known establishment with the unpromising sign of the Dead Rat (*Rat Mort*). What the original name was, I know not. It is now so called in commemoration of an unfortunate rodent who interrupted the amorous passages of two of the customers, and suffered death in consequence. His corpse will be shown you if you are fool enough to ask for it. Opposite, by the way, is a less pretentious café, flaunting the sign of the *Rat qui n'est pas mort*. The hostelry of the Dead Rat has been described once for all by Mr Filson Young, in his fine novel of Parisian life,



At the Rat Mort (downstairs).



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*The Sands of Pleasure.* “ This is one of the most curious restaurants in the world. It is different things at different hours of the day and night. You can dine in this room almost alone, and most excellently; you have the attentions of the *chef* and the chief *maître d’hotel* almost exclusively to yourself. Downstairs, the world of Montmartre dines liberally but indifferently for 2 fr. 50; upstairs, from eleven to two, the gay Parisienne and her cavalier drop in to supper; you see they are beginning to drop out now. After two, the Rat Mort becomes quite a different place. A certain few distinguished *cocottes*—distinguished in many different ways—and their friends come on here, and the restaurant resolves itself into an informal club.”

In the summer, at any rate, it is not open till midnight. You may await its opening in the mean little café downstairs and round the corner, where the real Montmartroises forgather, and endeavour, when stray foreigners drop in, to forestall their swell competitors now on their way from the south. The scene upstairs is not greatly different from that we have witnessed at Maxim’s. The men are the same, but look a little wearier; the women are the same, no sleepier than before, but growing more and more impatient of the kind

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of false decorum, a travesty of the social rule, which Mr Young observed as reigning here: "Hosts and guests, though essentially buyers and sellers, fell into the usages of hospitality, and the one subject tabooed in conversation was the origin and purpose of their presence here."

Well, not the sole purpose. A large proportion of the men are here out of curiosity. A larger number still from habit. As to the women, the Parisian *cocotte*, when in a whirl of high spirits, appears to forget her business interests altogether. She is fond of fun—different indeed from her English sister. As we pass down the Rue Pigalle we meet two of the light-hearted fraternity coming up, one on each side of the street. They are choking with laughter. They are ringing the electric-bell of each house they pass, the doors opening automatically behind them. A schoolboy's trick, but one which shows that the conditions of her life in the gay city do not extinguish in the *cocotte* the natural child-like gaiety of the Gaul.

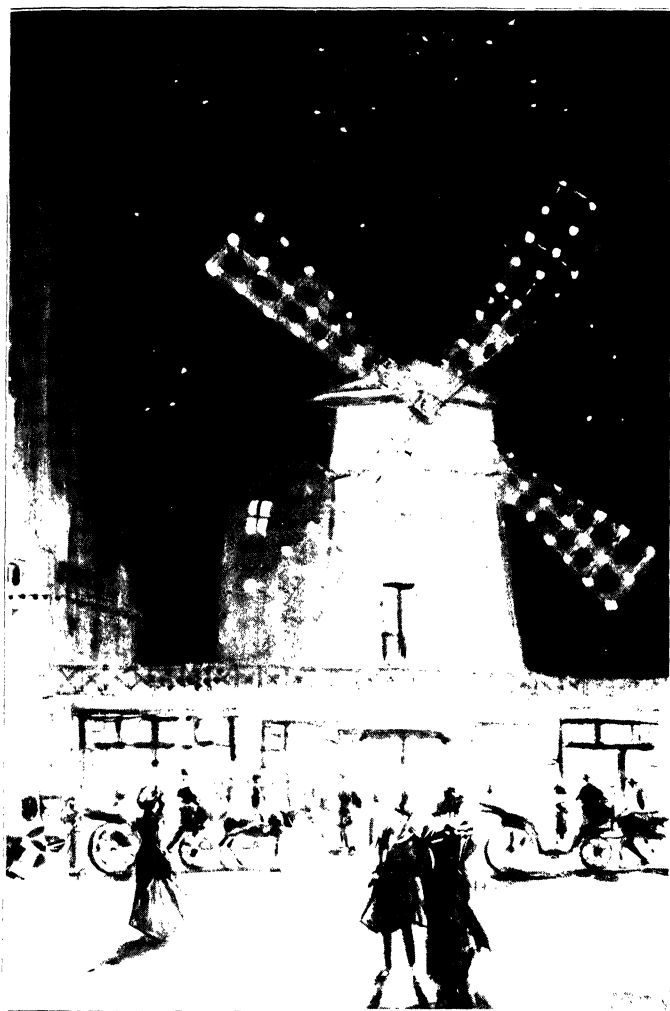
You find indeed an Arcadian strain running through all the feverish, bacchanalian life of Paris. Hence it has never the sordid aspect it has with us. Our *noceurs* are represented returning to their suburban homes "with the

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milk ”; the Parisian man of pleasure, when heated with wine, sick with too much smoke, angry with Fifine or Odette, reels out into the Place Pigalle, and drives away to the Bois. The dew cools his brow, and in the keen air of the dawn his spirits revive. He sings old love songs, he waves his hat, he has drawn a new draught of life from the generous bosom of Mother Earth. In the Allées he meets other revellers, wild-eyed students and grisettes with tumbled hair, as fresh and gay as when they startled the birds just after midnight with their laughter and dances. Weary *roué* and fresh grisette alike descend upon the Pré Catelan, and clamour for milk. The waiters know these early visitants in all their moods—repentant, maudlin, sullen, resolute, poetic, and hilarious. Sometimes they insist on visiting the cows—for the Pré Catelan is quite farm-like. Affecting interviews take place between the penitent *noceur* and the good, wholesome, horned beast. Some of the girls weep and begin to talk about the old folks at home, when, as virtuous maidens, they passed their time feeding the pigs and occasionally slitting the throats of trustful fowls. These were incidents of a truly virtuous existence, when they gave no pleasure to themselves or other

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people. After that, breakfast à la Watteau in the grey dawn. Many a man and woman has driven back to Paris, resolving that this shall be the beginning of a new life, that this shall be the first stage of the journey back to the old home in the provinces. Next night finds them as far on their way as—Montmartre.



The Red Mill.





## CHAPTER II

### THE BUTTE

MONTMARTRE—it is concentrated essence of Paris, or, to put it another way, it is Paris in little. It is the “head” on the fizzing measure of Parisian gaiety. As an institution it has no parallel. There is no particular quarter in any other capital that I know of, where rich and poor deliberately go to shake off all restraint, all considerations of decorum and etiquette, and to have a jolly good time. We cannot imagine West-End clubmen, on being turned out of their marble halls and gilded saloons, driving off at two in the morning to Peckham Rye or Happy Hampstead, to end up their revels there. Even the decorous jollity of Greenwich is no more. The Parisian at the Butte reminds one irresistibly of the horse which is relieved of its saddle, and on being led into its favourite field, rolls on its back in the mud and kicks up its heels with vigorous abandon.

Even at Montmartre one is not gay all day, though the descent of its work-girls upon Paris

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in the morning, and their return in the evening, have something of the character of a carnival procession. The typical Montmartroise is a work-girl. She differs in unmistakable respects from the *cocotte* of the grand boulevards and the grisette of the Quartier. She never loses her zest for the work-room and the factory.

“The Montmartroise,” writes M. Georges Montorgueil (himself a dweller on the Butte), “educated and grown up in the work-room, loves work and remains for ever faithful to it. She never learns the art of wasting time. Gilded leisure bores her. She misses in her *salon* the atmosphere of the *atelier*; she sighs for the bustle of the hive, its spontaneous gaiety. She relishes, indeed, the fine clothes that make her old companions envious, and the establishment that flatters her vanity; but she is incapable of becoming the mistress of a house; she is fidgety, unused to give orders, bothered by attentions, and awkward at finding herself no longer her own servant. In the midst of comparative luxury, when condemned to inaction, she sighs for the past and yearns for the bread of poverty and merriment. *Ouvrière*, the daughter of *ouvriers*, always an *ouvrière*, she returns to work, even while fortune smiles upon

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her, in spite of the lover who is ready to pay for her idleness. She is never the slave of any man; she belongs only to herself."

The *petite couturière* of Montmartre is the object of particular interest and attention from those leisured and elderly gentlemen who pass the whole day in the streets of Paris, seeking for something new. These are fine spirits to whom the elemental characteristics of the *cocotte* either cannot make or have ceased to make any appeal. They are true sportsmen, who can take pleasure only in the quarry that has been brought down after a long day's run. For them there is no relish in love without the spice of adventure. And like the fox imagined by our sportsmen, the Montmartroise likes being hunted. She regales her companion on the way home with the sallies of her pursuers and her own tart rejoinders: "Si tu savais ce que le vieux m'a dit!" A whispered word and the two girls shake with laughter. Very disconcerting this to the gentlemanly *suiveur* circumspectly following. In this respect the lady of the Rue Pigalle is as like our shop-girl as she is unlike her in the matter of social ambition. The hunt is fiercest and the sport best towards nightfall. Then, weary with the pleasures of the chase, the

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*suiveur* may turn to the less sportsmanlike joys provided for so liberally at Montmartre.

He finds the Boulevard de Clichy and its continuation, the Boulevard Rochechouart, bordered but not illuminated by the lights of innumerable houses of entertainment. Some of these are of almost world-wide notoriety, and are, in truth, at Montmartre, but not of it. There are the Cafés du Ciel, de l'Enfer, du Néant, etc., wherein a Parisian is much more of a curiosity than is any foreigner. Cook's tourists, having eluded the watchful eye and paternal vigilance of their conductor, sneak up to these places, and feel that they have indeed seen the inner life of Paris. If you visit any one of these *cabarets* you are not likely to go to another. The Ciel presents upon your entrance rather the aspect of a mediæval dining-hall. The attendants are dressed like Merovingian kings—a costume which we never heard was worn in Heaven—and they accost you as "My brother." Mock sermons are preached and benedictions given. You all troop upstairs, and are shown some illusions, or living pictures, all very tame in comparison with the Jardin de Paris. To vary the monotony, you allow yourself to be beguiled into going behind the scenes, where

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you sit on a chair and wonder what is going to happen. After this interval of suspense you rejoin the audience, and are then informed that by means of some optical illusion you have appeared encircled by naked houris, divesting yourself of your clothing, or otherwise looking ridiculous. Three youths of the Polytechnic variety are here. They wear a look of reckless dare-devilry, and feel that they are indeed going it. A party of Americans who have seen only the second part of the show, are politely urged at its conclusion towards the lower hall by one of the attendants; they are distrustful and cautious, and warn the man that they will have no fool tricks played on them, etc., etc. They speak to him in English, very slowly and deliberately, under the impression, common to many of their countrymen, that any language spoken that way is comprehensible to anybody everywhere. Yet it is doubtful if they themselves would understand a sentence in Japanese, however deliberately and distinctly it might be enunciated.

If you have been so unfortunate as to visit this grotesque exhibition in the early evening, on emerging you will see little to justify the reputation of Montmartre, though there is

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plenty of life in the Place Clichy, it is true, where a knot of people wait patiently for omnibuses which are always full. But when nine has struck, Montmartre comes out to take the air on the boulevards. Strong men perform marvellous feats in the centre of a curious and not ungenerous group of chance spectators. A little further on you find a stout, battered-looking lady blindfolded and seated on an egg-box. It is given to her to foretell the future by merely holding the inquirer's hand. As she does not attempt to read the past, the youth of both sexes are eager to test her skill, and are rewarded by extraordinary prophecies of conubial bliss and commercial prosperity. When the seer in her rapturous visions refers vaguely to tropic skies, some of the more promising youths gathered round, look ill at ease. They have heard of the climatic advantages of Cayenne and "La Nouvelle." It was hardly tactful of the prophetess, also, to refer to widows as concerned with the settlement of her clients' affairs. There is a *veuve* at La Roquette, with whom and with whose man of affairs, M. Deibler, some of those present have no wish to be more intimately acquainted. However, on the whole, the clairvoyante anticipates the fondest hopes of the

## The Butte

young Montmartrois, and reaps a substantial harvest of sous. She does better than the accomplished *prestidigitateur* farther on, and as well, as far as one can judge, as the singer of highly improper topical songs, whose pitch is to the right of the Place Pigalle.

In his better days this hungry vocalist probably delighted the audiences of one of the *cabarets*, *cafés*, *cafés concerts*, or *caves*, which line the north side of the boulevards. These establishments give you a pretty clear idea of the haunts described by Thackeray in his sketch, *A Night's Pleasure*. In fact, to realise what London was like in the forties, you must visit Paris to-day. The *Chat Noir*, I take it, does not differ greatly from the "Cave of Harmony," though I am not sure that ladies frequented the latter place, and we can be quite sure that there was nothing like the *bonhomie* and simple fun that characterises the French establishment. But the *Chat Noir* of to-day is (so we are told) a feeble reflection of the *Chat Noir* of old. "To pass an evening at the *Chat Noir*" (says M. Montorgueil), "in its picturesque setting of the Rue Victor-Massé, was to enjoy yourself at once with the ears and eyes; it was to live for two hours in the world of magic and dreams. The



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most exuberant satire and the most exquisite poetry wooed the visitor, already charmed by the aspect of this mediæval hostelry," over the door of which was written *Passant, sois moderne*.

The *Chat Noir* nowadays is situated in the Boulevard de Clichy, and its interior is not mediæval, but reminds one rather of an old-fashioned kitchen. The eponymous animal is represented in every conceivable (and inconceivable) attitude on the walls, which are also adorned with other illustrations of the kind one would expect at Montmartre. You are greeted with the title of monseigneur, and waited upon by a man in knee-breeches and silk stockings. The audience is of the lower-middle class. The men seem to be clerks or small shopkeepers with whom are mingled, perhaps, two or three non-commissioned officers, and a stray foreigner. The girls are of the same class as the men—their lawful spouses, sisters, and *fiancées* apparently. The *cocotte* does not angle for such small fry, and the *grisette* finds the audience too bourgeois for her taste. A fat man stands on a box next to the piano and sings a highly indecent song with an air of frankness and innocence that wins your heart. The respectable married women present are convulsed with laughter. It occurs



The Chat Noir.



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to none of them to blush. What is an Englishman to make of such people? The truth is that modesty, in the beginning an artificial quality, and belonging to certain social conditions, is dying out in France. It pains us who can't do without it to observe how easily others can.

A grim young lady who combines the offices of cashier and *claque*, calls for a round of applause, which is given in a sort of rhythmical chorus after the fashion in these places. The singer offers his song to the audience, and sells a couple of copies. One of his admirers stands him a drink. An odd-looking man, rather like the gnomes of the fairy tales, now mounts the box, and in song ridicules the chief magistrate of the Republic. A policeman is on duty here, as at all other establishments of the kind. He is supposed to safeguard the interests of law and order, and to prevent too grave an infraction of the moral law. These officers interpret their instructions in the most liberal way, and I am now quite unable to conceive a transgression so enormous as to call for their intervention, yet in less enlightened days they were known to have imposed limits on the saltatory revelations of the great Goulue and Grille d'Egout.

There are several items in the programme at

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the *Chat Noir* which, in the journalese of Carmelite Street would be called healthy and wholesome. The short, fat man sings that capital old song—"J'ai deux grands bœufs dans mon étable"—sings it well and amid general applause, though a lady present hisses the sentiment conveyed in the refrain:

"J'aime Jeanne, ma femme ; eh bien,  
J'aimerais mieux la voir mourir  
Que voir périr mes bœufs."

French audiences have not forgotten their right to express disapproval as well as disapprobation. A patriotic song, extolling Napoleon is hissed by some anti-militarists, but the misfortunes of the two Grenadiers of Gennevilliers, illustrated by a shadow play, meet with unanimous sympathy. And so the performance goes on, providing infinitely better fare for the price of a franc (and beer thrown in) than you would get at a London hall for five times the money.

These cafés concerts are as plentiful at Montmartre as leaves in Vallombrosa. Each pretends to eccentricity and originality. At the old *Chat Noir* the visitor was adjured to be modern; the cafés strive among themselves which shall be the most bizarre. We may look in at the Cabaret

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Bruant. This bears the name of a locally illustrious personage, who was something of a poet and very much of a *poseur*. He has now transferred his talents to a more pretentious hall in the Boulevard St Martin. His mantle has fallen on the broad shoulders of Raphael and André, two herculean personages, one or both of whom may be said to dominate the little place as you enter. Raphael resembles an overfed church dignitary. He wears a seductively smooth and glossy suit of velvet, with voluminous breeches, which are thrust into heavy military boots; his broad bosom swells with conscious pride beneath a scarlet vest, and he strides to and fro, blowing great clouds of smoke into the air, like one of Ouida's demi-gods. A benign and splendid person! During the early part of the evening he rarely condescends to sing. His hired men entertain the audience, which is somewhat listless. You find the same types here as at the *Chat Noir*. There is the little *coutourière* with her young man, and an artillery sergeant who leans back very much at his ease with unbuttoned tunic. When Raphael and his staff are in a merry mood they greet newcomers heartily but hardly politely. The French equivalents of "Hullo, face!" and

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“Great Scott! what a mug!” are among the little courtesies with which you may expect to be assailed. Two gentlemen enter unobtrusively and seat themselves, not so quietly, however, as to escape the attention of the singer. “After all,” he says after an ominous pause, “it doesn’t matter. They are only two grocer’s assistants. Let us continue.” These sallies give intense delight to the audience, particularly to those against whom they are directed. It is felt that to be thus signalled is after all a distinction. For a brief instant the Montmartrois feels that he is in the public eye.

The *Araignée* or Cabaret des Truands is of a different *genre*. It is not named, by the way, after the once-celebrated *Princesse de l’Araignée*, the mistress of a well-known crowned head. To enter this establishment is to feel obviously and literally like a meandering fly entrapped in the spider’s web. Men with crudely painted faces, dressed in quaint, mediæval garb, long-haired and with feathered caps, and women with the well-developed charms of the *houri*, bearing on their shameless faces a smile of inducement more suggestive than innocent, flock round to tempt their unwary prey—if anyone visiting the palaces of pleasure in Montmartre can have their

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eyes so little opened as to deserve the epithet unwary! One bizarre attendant takes the orders for drink; a franc admission entitles to a bock, but to ask for crème de menthe of a poisonous-looking green at fifty centimes extra, increases the urbanity of the vendor. A second holds forth in a voluble dialect concerning the delights of the entertainment. A third is selling souvenirs in the shape of the daintiest silver spiders that ever spun metallic webs. Such things cast one's folly in one's face at every turn, and bold indeed would be he who ventured along the Boulevard de Clichy openly wearing on his breast this emblem of a moment's delusion. We slink in among the crowd and take the appointed seats round a table of wrought ironwork, and pale golden-tinted bocks make an appearance in deep glasses, and with less flavour of ditchwater than some that are to be found in similar resorts. A mysterious half-gloom, yet with a red glow, induces in the most hardened sightseer some little expectation of mystery and weird rites. All eyes are fixed on the *mise en scène*. It is a witches' kitchen, cries one, a thieves' kitchen! It is the refectory of a monastery suggests another. There are boiling cauldrons, frying-pans, shovels, strange vegetable growths representing huge



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carrots and turnips, birds and bats of darkness, infernal appliances with diabolic faces that by some unknown process plunge the observer into the mystic atmosphere of the Middle Ages. Presently there is a loud beating of kettle-drums, and the showman in a raucous voice spouts forth his introductory description. He informs his audience that they are princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses, or at least counts and countesses, and helps them to transport themselves into the fifteenth century, the days of witchcraft and wizardry, when strange sights were not unusual and illusions were thought to be real. Suddenly the hall is all in darkness, the sing-song voice of the showman, the rat-tat-tat of the drum ends in a tense silence, and from a black curtain the nude figures of three women are blazoned forth in light. They stand in a row, posing immovable, and almost before the eye has grasped their primitive lack of drapery, they are suddenly clothed in gayest coloured garments. Costume after costume changes with quick variety. The history of dress in France from the earliest period—military, social, official, professional—all are represented. From France to the other nations is an easy transition, American, Grecian, Swedish follow in quick and

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bewildering succession. Not till their pose is strained to breaking point are the living models released from the rainbows of colour and allowed to disappear in blackness.

Perhaps the show which follows appeals more to the resident of the district than the tourist, if any of the former require to take lessons in the art of light-fingering. The audience is asked to step one at a time upon the stage and extract purses and other valueless trifles from a figure suspended on a gibbet, whilst numerous bells upon his person give warning of the least lack of skill in this feat of legerdemain. The audience is again invited to play a part in the next entertainment, and a moment later men dressed incongruously in the height of fashion, or in the student array of the Latin Quartier appear to the audience in the setting of fairy bowers or the Garden of Eden, whilst sylph-like maidens and seductive Eves—before the fall—sport round them and bestow tantalising caresses, to which their lack of response is proportionate with their ignorance of what is taking place. But these things are not new. The nude fair and the gay cavaliers who turn to leering satyrs as they sip of the honey of love are as old as the fruit of the tree of

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knowledge itself. It is only in Montmartre, because the world seems young and vital, the mood light and uncritical, the women really gay and attractive, that such things please even for a moment. When the light goes up and a fanfare of trumpets bear witness that the management wish to clear the house, dukes and duchesses, princes and princesses, scorning half-emptied glasses, are content to become ordinary mortals once more. They file out upon the boulevard, and—if they are rash enough—blow a pæan of youth on the penny flutes presented as a souvenir.

Leaving this hostelry, you emerge into the boulevard, and run into a group of lads of the apache type, who have emerged from one of the numerous side streets that run up the slopes of the Butte (as the hill on which Montmartre is built is called). They do not strike an Englishman as very formidable. Weedy, pale, undersized specimens of French manhood, between the ages of fifteen and twenty, they would seem to stand a poor chance in a rough-and-tumble. But they do not trust to their fists. They are handy with the knife, and still handier with their feet, with which they can smash your nose or black your eye most dexterously. At present

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they are merely in a wagsome mood, and are up to no more serious mischief than banging at the window of a motor-car stationed outside the Rat Mort. They join the crowd that is gazing down through a grating into the kitchen of that famous restaurant, and you forget their misdeeds when you perceive the wistful, strained look of hunger that comes over their faces as the savoury smell reaches their nostrils. Alas! It is that savoury smell and the vision of these delightful ladies and well-fed gentlemen spending their unearned gold on a night's orgy, that sharpen the edge of the apache's blade.

Many of these young ruffians follow a less honourable calling than the highway robber's. Even when they do not live entirely on the earnings of some wretched woman, they frequently combine the *rôles* of *souteneur* and apache.

"The *souteneur* of Montmartre," says Georges Montorgueil "is a distinct species. He is native. His mother, his *dabe*, on whom he will fall back if he is broke, is some good woman of Clichy or St Ouen, over-indulgent to her son, who began his evil courses coming out of the Moulin de la Galette in the shades of the Impasse Girardon. He is a young ruffian, full of words and up to many dodges. At Place

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Maubert crime follows Italian methods and employs the knife; Montmartre is less violent—they merely knock you down. In the Avenue des Tilleuls, Pons the fighter openly keeps a tavern. His den is an arena and a gymnasium. Professionals give instruction to all the young blackguards of the Butte, who aim at founding their empire on terror. The police once laid by the heels one of these bandits, lord of the territory of Clichy, who made a practice of levying tribute every night on every prostitute within his district. He carried a knife in his belt. The woman who resisted received an ugly cut—never on the face, for it is a bad plan to spoil your own stock-in-trade. This tyranny lasted months, without any complaint from the unfortunate women. The denunciation of a *souteneur* exposes them, as they well know, to inexorable punishment.”

The bully of more decent appearance is the pest and bugbear of the *cabarets*. He is not easy to identify, and when he is at last spotted and warned off, he generally contrives to have his revenge. When these gentry were ejected from the old *Chat Noir* they returned in force night after night, and pitched battles were fought on the *terrasse*. When one of his waiters had been

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killed, the proprietor thought it time to move to the Boulevard de Clichy. The fraternity sit at the receipt of custom nowadays at various drinking-shops in the side streets. Women come into them from time to time to pay their dues, and offer them refreshment. Their "protectors" greet them with abuse, sometimes with scowls, more often with some brutal sarcasm, which cuts into them more sharply than a knife, and convulses the other gentlemen present with laughter. An ugly look comes across the poor creature's face, but the next moment she goes back to her work with the air of a whipped cur. Sometimes she tries to conciliate the brute with caresses, and if her takings have been good, he may possibly deign to unbend to them. A stranger does not linger long in these dens of infamy. He is not likely to be threatened with violence, for the regular patrons of the establishment know perfectly well that their disgusting habits and conversation will soon procure them the privacy they desire.

In the street you will meet their victims plying their trade—brushing against the aristocrats of their profession, who have come up from Maxim's or the Olympia. There is a stage lower still for these *déclassées* of the *déclassées*. On

## The Night Side of Paris

the outermost boulevards prowls the miserable "*femme de fortifs*," more often than not a mere decoy. A decoy, too, for the most despicable game—for journeymen, butchers' assistants, meat porters—the contents of whose pockets would hardly, one would think, pay for their assailant's drinks.

The whole subject is not a pleasant one, and we need not pursue our inquiries in this direction further. But the animal passions are so obtrusive in every phase of life in Paris that these manifestations of them could not be ignored. Obtrusive, I say; but there is no reason to suppose that Paris is actually guiltier in this respect than any other European capital.

Since we have strayed so far into the dangerous and unsavoury purlieus of Montmartre, let us retrace our steps and see something more of the gay side of life in the Quartier. Sandwich boards, even in the most fashionable parts of Paris, have already proclaimed that there will be a ball to-night "*chez Tabarin*," and "*chez Tabarin*" we now proceed, along the Rue Victor Massé, where once the *Chat Noir* stood. We cannot mistake the place—the entrance coruscates with light. You pay two francs for admission. It is significant that ladies pay only fifty

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centimes. Clearly the management desires to encourage ladies *chez* Tabarin. Your cane is promptly seized by one of the breed of harpies who infest the portals of French places of entertainment, and you find yourself in a spacious and rather handsomely decorated hall. At one side is the bar, and a considerable part of the beautifully polished floor is occupied by chairs and tables. However, there is still plenty of room for dancing. You take a seat at one of the tables and watch the scene. For the men you can find no more definite description than middle-class. Few of them, we should imagine, ever spend a night at Maxim's; few, on the other side, seem short of money, or to look twice at a gold piece. Well-to-do tradesmen, clerks drawing good "screws" they seem to be, with a few artists and students. Mingling with these are a few young fellows more poorly dressed, who regard the ball as quite an event and dance every dance. No one wears evening dress except two Americans who stroll in and out among the tables with a supercilious air. The men all wear their hats, even when they dance. The women with them seem more often to be their sweethearts or (let us say) companions than their wives, though Tabarin is not shunned by



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"the respectable woman." But most of the women have come without men's escort. You distinguish several familiar types among them. There is the professional *cocotte*, here a rather pleasing type, being neither overdressed nor over-developed; there is the half-timer and the shop-girl "out on the spree."

The men do not seem anxious to dance. The girls coax them in vain, and go off to dance with each other, the men dismissing them like children to their play. The floor is crowded with dancers, but every second girl has a girl for a partner. They hold their skirts very high and very tightly, so as to display their figures to the utmost advantage. Certainly there are some very well-shaped legs at Tabarin's. I suspect that it is to watch these that the gentlemen prefer to sit out the dances. Here, certainly, the onlooker sees most of the game. The dances are very short, and the dancing slow and indifferent. Some of the couples wag their arms up and down in a manner reminding one of a pump-handle. Here, as everywhere else in Paris, you are struck by the number of quite elderly men enjoying themselves boyishly and boisterously. For that matter I have always felt that Paris is essentially the city of the

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middle-aged man. To appreciate life here to the full you must possess a larger share of experience and confidence than men under thirty can usually boast.

The floor is cleared and a troupe of English girls take the field. The lime-light is turned upon them, and you recognise the traits that Parisians like most in our womanhood. The girls are very young, and their dancing betrays the angularity of youth; their voices are those we hear in the streets of Islington and Hammer-smith; the smiles on their faces are forced. French girls of their age don't need to force their smiles. But the fresh young faces stand even the glare of the lime-light, and the audience give the troupe rousing applause. Then they retire, and you see them in the gallery watching the ball from their open *loges*. Two of them, however, have condescended to take refreshment with gentlemen friends at tables in the balcony, and they sit there among the people in their stiff, heavy ballet skirts. They are succeeded (as at the Jardin de Paris) by a *quadrille excentrique*. The dancers cannot be compared with those of the Jardin. Three of them are women of quite mature years, with no pretensions to grace or good looks. They are

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distinguished, however, by extreme good-humour and a geniality which makes them great favourites with the onlookers. The eight of them pull up their stockings and tighten their garters with the *sang-froid* born of long practice. They rub their feet in sand and commence the quadrille. There is the usual display of lingerie, in fact, the whole thing is a poor—one might say a miserable—edition of the Jardin performance. The dance concludes with the collapse of the women on the floor in the attitude known as “the splits.” The severe, business-like expression they wear in this ridiculous posture is curious to witness.

They mingle with the audience, and the ball is resumed. The *cocottes* become a little importunate as the night grows older, and occasionally and a little timidly ask men to dance with them. Some of them are accomplished waltzers. The dance concluded, their partners, of course, offer them refreshments at the bar. There a good many temporary alliances are negotiated. A middle-aged Parisian pronounces in a quiet corner on the relative charms of legs in socks and legs in stockings, and decides in favour of the stockinged lady. He whirls her off into the dance with the agility



**The Bal Tabarin.**

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little older—errand-boys, van-boys, and the like. Something of the Arcadian spirit which crops up persistently and unexpectedly in Paris was perceptible here. No doubt the relations of the girls and boys even at this tender age were not such as moralists would sanction, but the couples were genuine sweethearts. Each lad had his own lass, and woe betide him if he made eyes at another! They enjoyed themselves thoroughly these youngsters, and knew here, perhaps, the only real loves that ever were to animate them. To-day the Moulin has been vulgarised. The little *ouvrière* cannot enter—she must get a hat first; her “boy” cannot escort her, because he has not a shirt! What it has lost in simplicity, the ball cannot be said to have gained in virtue. When you have climbed the rustic stair that leads to the dancing hall on the first floor of the mill, you see a whirling, jostling crowd, in which you recognise a class of *petites femmes* rather less correct than those at the Tabarin; an audience of young fellows of the “rough” variety. The same shrieks as at the Tabarin, varied by angry imprecations. Ugly passions slumber beneath the heated countenances of the dancers. There is a yell. and a rush of dancers to a corner of the hall.

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Someone has trodden on Odette's dress; her "type" has landed the offender a brutal blow on the nose with his heel; the two men are struggling with each other on the floor. Men and girls jump on tables and chairs to see the fun. The policeman always on duty rushes through the crowd, and using the flat of his little sword, and with the assistance of the attendants, separates the combatants and drags them to the door. He has no sooner disappeared with his captives than a more ferocious fight still is engaged in by Odette and a lady friend of the man first struck. The two girls have hurled the foulest imprecations at each other, and now they close. The stouter of the two loses her breath, she is thrown violently back by her antagonist; suddenly she seizes a bottle of beer on a table that has escaped being overturned, and crashes it over the other's head. The tall, thin girl shrieks and falls backward. At this moment luckily a big, burly man seizes the other fury round the waist and drags her, screaming and fighting, away. The other girl revives and rushes after her enemy. She falls into the arms of the "municipal," and is hurried out. The crowd disperses—the incident is no uncommon one—and the dance is continued. The band

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has been playing merrily throughout the *fracas*.

Very horrible and repugnant. Quite so. But scenes quite as strange take place in our streets nightly. Our savages, however, do not come to dances. They prefer the beer-shop, and it is beer, not jealousy, that goads them into fury. Passion has a different object in each of the two countries.

Very different scenes are to be witnessed at the Moulin de la Galette on Sunday afternoons. Then it is the resort of decent, well-conducted working-people, when the little *ouvrière* dances under the eyes of mamma with her cousin or her next-door neighbour's son.

Montmartre even has need of a little tranquil recreation. Tired of dancing and rollicking, the artists, who are numerous in this quarter, drop into the Auberge du Clou at the corner of the Avenue Trudaine. Here, in a typical country inn you see students, sculptors, painters and men of rather serious aspect, enjoying a quiet game of cards. A man and woman are talking earnestly in another corner. The proprietor and the waiters have an air very unlike that to be noted elsewhere on the Butte. Willette has frequented the place, and has adorned the walls

## The Butte

of the lower chamber with drawings illustrating "The French Harlot's Progress." The Auberge du Clou is not the least startling of the surprises which Montmartre plans for its patrons. But we have seen enough of it. We hasten back to the Place Clichy, and board the last 'bus bound for the Odéon.



## CHAPTER III

### IN THE QUARTIER

THE lecture over, the Sorbonne empties itself into the gardens of the Luxembourg. While on the west side of the gardens you thread your way through happy bourgeois groups—madame with her sewing, the children playing, the *bonne* looking on, or dividing her attentions between them and a military friend—on the other side of the basins, you enter Bohemia at a stride—Bohemia, too, not so much changed since Murger's day. Outwardly not very much, in spirit very little. If it is a fine evening, there will be quite a concourse under the trees. A curious crowd, too, including types startling to the Englishman. The students, especially those who follow the plastic arts, vie with each other in originality of costume. The velvet coat, the loose or very tight velvet breeches, the flowing cravate, the broad-brimmed hat, bent into every conceivable shape, these are the least of the sartorial wonders presented to our gaze. Here is a type peculiar to France, per-



A "Type."



## In the Quartier

haps to Paris. A radiantly beautiful youth of eighteen or thereabouts, his hair brushed smooth and curling up at the ends just over his shoulder, like the maidens of Rossetti; less graceful is his tunic—I call it that for want of its proper name—buttoned closely round his perfect form, up to the neck, without sign of shirt or tie or collar. Perhaps he has none—no unusual want in the Quartier. He is one of a merry group formed around a personage, who might have been the hero of one of Grimm's fairy tales—a tall, black-bearded man, with a white steeple-crowned hat, an enormous bow beneath his chin, knee-breeches with purple stockings and sabots, the rest of his garments concealed by a Spanish cloak. What is he, you ask yourself—a poet, a sculptor, or simply an original? No one jeers at him or derides him. In the Quartier no eccentricity of attire would cause a passer-by to turn his head. Our wizard-like friend is in delightful company. Mixed with the students are half-a-dozen pretty girls, who irresistibly remind you of so many sparrows. Their prattle and laughter put you in a good-humour with the world. You realise with thankfulness that the grisette remains in spirit the same as those that Murger knew. She is very much in evidence

## The Night Side of Paris

this fine evening. You count half-a-dozen groups of boys and girls (with plenty of men old enough to be amusing themselves more seriously), disposed in circles on the uncomfortable little garden chairs. What a contrast the grisettes present to the *types*! And as they are in the latest fashions, in the high-waisted dress, the big hat, the frilled collar, the open-work stockings and the high-heeled shoes of the grand boulevards. As you look closer you perceive these costumes, though admirably well cut, and evidently the work of good *costumières*, are often the worse for wear. Mimi has expended her little all in the purchase of this gown six months ago, or perhaps Auguste, before he returned to his provincial home, bought it for her as a parting gift; and as she has no other she has worn it ever since. But how proud she is of it, and how well it shows off her graceful figure! She is an artist's model, probably, and has just finished her round of the *croquis* classes, posing perhaps for four hours altogether, and making about as many francs on the whole afternoon. She knows all the students, and runs from one group to another, volubly exchanging greetings. The students don't much bother about her; they are too busy exerting themselves to be funny and

## In the Quartier

brilliant. Certainly they succeed more often than we English do. But what amazes us most is that these smart-looking girls should so obviously delight in the company of grotesquely-dressed, frequently ragged men. Our girls in England are not like that. Our grisettes—by which I mean our chorus-girls, shop-girls and waitresses—like only the man who looks *quite the gentleman*. Imagine a London barmaid being seen in the park with a man who wore his hair long and velvet knickerbockers! Even in the class to which Mimi belongs, or from which she sprung, the traditional respect for culture has penetrated—a tradition that has never reached our bourgeoisie at all, and has left our young womankind almost unaffected. Mimi will shrug her shoulders: “Auguste n’a pas le sou, mais il à tant d’esprit. Figurez-vous ce qu’il m’a dit. . .!” And she recounts his latest sally with ecstatic pride. Seeing these girls, you know why the boundaries of Bohemia have never included any part of Great Britain. Our *soi-disant* Bohemia is an Eveless Eden, and must ever remain so; our “Bohemians” are usually elderly, bottle-nosed journalists and actors, who congregate in fourth-rate clubs to fuddle themselves with whisky and tell stories disparaging

## The Night Side of Paris

their wives—and other men's. So long as the English girl's ideal of manhood is the rich, and fatuous Guardsman, she will never pick up shells on the beaches of Bohemia, or listen to Pan piping in the woodlands.

Not that the grisette is entirely disinterested in her affections. Girls are pointed out to you, who live on the students as well as with them; then, too, there are the *femmes du quartier* of a higher stamp. You see them sitting in twos in the gardens, talking together, till they are joined by a man friend, a student with an air *plus sérieux* than his fellows. Then again there are the women students themselves, of all nationalities; Russian and Roumanian, it has always seemed to me, predominating. They walk about beneath the trees, form knots, promenade and gaze pensively into the fountains. Children are running about everywhere. Suddenly there is a general rush to a particular spot. A lady rushes forward and dramatically points her finger at a waggish-looking student mounted on a chair. A *gardien de la paix*, his breast covered with medals, bids the youth descend in the name of the law. The youth refuses to do so, till he is informed of the charge made against him. It seems he has been aiming pea-nuts in all direc-

## In the Quartier

tions. The lady has been injured. This sort of thing is intolerable, all the bystanders agree; it must cease. (It has gone on ever since the University of Paris was founded somewhere in Hugues Capet's time). The *gardien* says that he asked the youth quite politely to come down. The youth "cheeks" the *gardien*, who retires, absolutely unprepared for a criminal who refuses to obey a command politely worded. Other policemen come up, and the *gardien* goes into the whole matter very thoroughly. A bystander asks for information, and they go into the matter very thoroughly with him. The representatives of the law stand side by side, and frown from a distance at the youth. He still occupies his commanding position, and harangues his comrades. The police keep him under close observation. At last, he descends and swaggers off with his friends. The police then enter into conversation with the public, and are congratulated on the firmness they have displayed in maintaining order.

By this time the loungers begin to feel hungry, and students with empty pockets attach themselves affectionately to their more fortunate comrades. Auguste invents an excuse to get rid of Mimi. She pouts and well-nigh



## The Night Side of Paris

weeps. Possibly it is not stinginess but want of money that prevents him asking her to dinner. At all events, she will be entertained by someone. So we make a move into the far-famed Boul' Miche. The students, having taken their *aperitifs* at the Taverne du Panthéon or the equally famous Café d'Harcourt, usually take their dinners at some less expensive restaurant. Two francs is all you need pay for a well-cooked and satisfying meal. If you dine *à la carte*, and are tolerably well known at your restaurant, you must not be indignant when the waiter, ordered to bring you asparagus or some such delicacy, warns you that it will cost you another fifty centimes. He is paternal, this waiter, and his advice is well meant. English and American students congregate in goodly numbers at a little restaurant on the Boulevard Raspail, where the waitresses perhaps remind them of Lyons' and Childs'. Acquaintances are quickly made here, especially between compatriots. Some of the prettiest English girls are to be seen here, by the way. One came from Manchester, and we can easily understand how a girl with a face like hers fled from a town like that! Here as at the other restaurants, poor Mimi in the Directoire dress, slips in, scenting a dinner



The Grisette To-day.



## In the Quartier

perhaps, and button-holes her student friends, till one invites her to sit down. Her eyes wander from table to table, and she is quick to note any look of admiration on a stranger's face. There is more life on the Boul' Miche at the dinner hour than out on the Raspail. While you are dining luxuriously for your two francs in the open air, you are amused by a group of students at a little bar opposite, who are making their evening meal off coffee and a sandwich. It is round them, curiously enough, that some of the prettiest girls in the Quartier are collected. Two or three of these damsels cannot be more than fifteen or sixteen. They are hardly old enough for professional models, one would think; most of them, probably, are *midinettes*. You cross over, and perhaps engage one in conversation. She is polite, but is not much interested in the stranger, and you observe that her eyes dwell lovingly on a shabby youth with long hair and a still longer pipe. With a word of excuse, she runs over to him, and presently the youthful lovers, whose united ages probably amount to thirty-five, go off arm-in-arm for a moonlit excursion in the Bois, followed by other couples. A penniless brigade, rich only in their capacity for love and happiness!

## The Night Side of Paris

You saunter up the boulevard and look in at the Café d'Harcourt. If there is to be a dance at Bullier's, you will find the famous restaurant very full. You find a seat, order a coffee and look around. The band, the frantic conversation, the clatter of knives and forks, the noise of glasses, make up a truly infernal din. The men impress you as being strangers to the Quartier, come here on the spree. Only a few appear to be genuine students—fewer still Bohemians. Several of the older men are in evening-dress—these we may put down as “old boys,” come to revisit their old haunts. The women are in many cases *cocottes*, but *cocottes* for all that native to the Quartier—married, as one of them once said, to the Sorbonne—and distinguished by some traces of the grisette's freshness from the women of the grand boulevards. They are very much at home, and some are playing cards with each other, or with their men friends. Everybody is in a lark or flirtatious mood. One girl quite innocently raises her skirt and thrusts her handkerchief into her stocking. An Englishman opposite her evokes a good deal of laughter by quietly imitating her, and thrusting his handkerchief and match-box into his sock. The Englishman is not the only foreigner present.

## In the Quartier

You see brown faces, yellow faces, bronze faces and black faces among the throng. The University is a beneficent guardian angel, beneath whose wings men gather from the uttermost parts of the earth.

For almost every separate race, a meeting-place is provided. The boulevard between the Place St Michel and the Gare de Sceaux is lined with cafés and restaurants, and each appears to have its own peculiar *clientèle*. The dusky sons of the Congo, of Madagascar, and of Martinique—among the best-dressed men in the Quartier—specially affect the Vachette, which is not on that account shunned by the fair daughters of Lutetia. The French do not entertain, by the way, that disdain for people of colour, which some of our English folk affect in the hope of being taken for Anglo-Indians. The Soufflet is, perhaps, the most select of the cafés. It is a good deal frequented by the cadets of the Ecole Polytechnique in their cocked hats, and has generally a pronounced military *cachet*. The gay ladies patronising the tables are also to be distinguished by a more reserved manner than is usual at the Harcourt. At the Source you may find a temporary relief from their attentions;

## The Night Side of Paris

for ladies unaccompanied are refused admission. The adjoining Café Steinbach has likewise a serious, tranquil air, and is patronised largely by the sons of the German fatherland. Round the corner is the Café François Premier, one of the traditional haunts of Verlaine. On the opposite side of the boulevard you find the Tavernes Lorraine and Pascal, where you may dine well and in the company of jolly students and pretty women. Much further afield—hardly in the Quartier, in fact, but of it—is Lavenue's, the well-known restaurant, adjacent to the Montparnasse Station. It is resorted to from all parts of Paris for its excellent cooking and wines, and has a very good band. Being on the confines of the artists' quarter, it is the rendez-vous of several celebrated wielders of the brush. It has a less enviable reputation as a favourite resort of married ladies accompanied by gentlemen other than their husbands, for whose benefit snug little *cabinets particuliers* are provided. *Une école de l'adultère* it is frankly called by a French writer. At any rate these ladies leave the casual stranger to dine in peace, which he cannot always be sure of doing at the livelier restaurants on the Boul' Mich'!

Having dined, you stroll out into the street.



The Café d' Harcourt.





## In the Quartier

About nine o'clock the scene—setting aside the cafés—has a good many points of resemblance to Electric Avenue, Brixton, or the Chiswick High Road at the same hour. Girls of all ages are passing and re-passing in twos and threes, come to stare at the boys and be stared at by them. Some of these damsels affect the haughty stare we thought peculiar to the English milliner's apprentice. More often their expression though demure invites you to make their acquaintance. Here you don't introduce yourself by the banal formulæ of the English streets: "What a nice evening!" or "Going for a stroll?" You are expected to begin with a well-turned compliment, with a desire quite warmly expressed to *faire une promenade*. Or, you can invite the lady—much depends on her age—to take some refreshment with you. *Detail particulier*, as the French say: your attentions will be better received if you are alone—the reverse apparently holding good in England. The Parisienne has more pluck, you see, than her Cockney sister. By ten o'clock most of the fellows and girls have sorted themselves out, and have either gone to the cafés or are making love—they do it still in France—along the quays or in the shade of the Luxembourg Gardens. If

## The Night Side of Paris

you haven't found a companion—or if, being an Englishman, you would not own to speaking to a lady without an introduction—you might pass your time worse than by looking in at the Caveau du Cercle in the Boulevard St Germain. It is situated, as all *caveaux* are, below the level of the ground, underneath a very ordinary *estaminet*, and is about the last of its kind in the Quartier. You find yourself on entering in a wooden cave, with the inevitable *agent* crouched at one end and a piano in the foreground. You take a seat at one of the little tables, and order your bock—forty centimes. The presiding genius is a personage called the archevêque de Montmartre! He is a quaint young man, with a longish pointed beard, and a curious, fascinating physiognomy. He has a sonorous speaking voice, which, as he announces in the longest and most extravagant phrases imaginable the singers and their songs, somehow recalls the slow, successive roll of the waves towards the shore. The artistes here are supposed to be amateurs. They are announced as *camarade* So-and-so, but I have a suspicion that they are in some way remunerated by the management. The songs, at all events, don't differ much in style or quality from those you

## In the Quartier

have heard at Montmartre. There appears to be some jealousy among these gifted young<sup>7</sup>men. A youth enters who is of a type that has become international, and is identified everywhere as the low comedian. He listens with a satiric smile to the vocal efforts of a comrade, and when these elicit a roar of laughter, he starts and asks in well-feigned astonishment, "How? has he said something funny, at last?" To such weaknesses are even Bohemians prone. Our friend presently sings a song by Béranger, mounting the platform behind the piano with an air of conscious superiority. He is followed by a lady very much the worse for exposure to time and adversity, who sings a highly improper song about the President of the Republic, which is vociferously applauded. The next singer is constantly interrupted by the persistent and not unmusical giggling of three nice little shop-girls seated at a table, drinking orangeade. The archbishop in his sternest accents requests them to desist. It is useless. After efforts, which you can see are doing them serious internal injury, mesdemoiselles break out again—giggling in a low, melodious way that might be continued for hours. The audience become indignant. The archbishop descends from the daïs, and remonstrates

## The Night Side of Paris

with the offenders. Finally they retreat to a remote corner of the establishment, and two students kindly take charge of them, and by turning their backs to the artistes, protect these last from further annoyance. Meanwhile our sympathetic comrade, Mdle. Sélysette, goes round offering chocolates and other sweetmeats to the audience. She retails these toothsome delicacies at the ordinary market rates, and the patrons of the establishment usually content themselves with two sous' worth of her wares. The emoluments of mademoiselle cannot be considerable. If she has to sing for her supper, the meal must be a light one.

The caves of harmony that continue to exist in the shadow of the Sorbonne differ little nowadays from the like places at Montmartre. They have lost nearly all their local features. The Cabaret du Père Lunette has gone altogether. The artist who frequented it is still to be met with at the Harcourt, where he will readily sketch your portrait, or that of any charming lady who may be in your company, for a franc or two francs, according to your appearance.

The students still dance at Bullier's. That far-famed dancing-hall is at the far end of the

## In the Quartier

Boul' Miche, in the Avenue de l'Observatoire, opposite the Closerie des Lilas, where they danced in Albert Smith's day. The exterior is like that of a country circus, gaudily painted with representations of the joys awaiting you within. You may shake a leg here on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays—the first day preferably, when the *femmes chics* of the Quartier appear to advantage in the mazy dance. They don't come the other days, being too busy with their rich patrons from the Rive Droite at the Harcourt and Panthéon. You drive up to the entrance and find a crowd collected who will audibly criticise your appearance and especially that of your lady friend with candour and vivacity. You may be surprised to find that the delightful little lady who has honoured you with her company is hailed by name as a well-known personage by the bystanders. "There's Berthe!" they will exclaim, "and what's that she has got with her?" Berthe, annoyed by these indiscretions, will hurry you into the hall, where you pay your two francs and surrender your stick or umbrella to the harpies in attendance. You need not trouble to remove your hat. The rather low hall is divided lengthwise by a row of columns; on one side is the orchestra,

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on another the usual terrace for those taking refreshments; on a third side the open arcades give directly on the garden. Crossing the floor you find yourself in a whirling, screaming, kicking mass of humanity. Who are these people—students? Well, only a minority. A great number of the men are clearly of the clerk and shop-assistant types. Still the student element gives a *cachet* to the place. Among them we notice an American who does not speak a word of French, but makes himself quite at home. You engage him in conversation. He arrived only an hour ago from Rome, he tells you, and came here right away without troubling to look for rooms. He guesses he'll find some after the show anyway, and—"Say! what fine girls these are anyhow!" They are, indeed, and among them we recognise several familiar faces from the cafés down the road. But mingled with these are the *demi-semi-mondaines*—shop-girls and clerks in search of profitable adventures, but not yet having acquired the bold *allures* of their professional rivals. As at the Tabarin a great many of the girls are dancing together, lifting their skirts higher and higher, and drawing them closer and closer, till you are forcibly reminded of the hosiers' advertisements



**Bullier's.**





## In the Quartier

in the ladies' papers. Two of these girls—apparently inseparable—you may have noticed on the boulevard. Observe that the blonde to-night makes a very liberal display of a purple silk petticoat. The brunette has no underskirt. When you next see them the case will be reversed. That silk petticoat is obviously the basis of their close friendship.

The dancing becomes almost frantic. If the orchestra plays a popular tune, the dancers will accompany it with all the force of their lungs. The quadrilles and lancers give abundant opportunities for a good deal of romping and horse-play. Some of the gestures are not too refined. The girls, more and more excited by the dance, defiantly lift their petticoats high above their waists. The men push them about and pinch their legs. The older men, as at the Tabarin, sit by at the tables, and beckon now and again to their favourite girls, who come over and kiss them warmly. The fun and the excitement is all spontaneous. There are no professional dancers, no special quadrilles arranged by the management. In a corner two girls are dancing the can-can within a circle of admirers, but the exhibition is entirely gratuitous and unofficial.

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Now and again a couple stroll out into the garden to seek the refuge of one of the convenient little caves or grottos, or to await the firework display at a table beneath the chestnut trees. Lovers stroll about with arms about each other's waists; the sounds of kissing proceed from dark corners. A wag proposes to discharge the fireworks before the time appointed, to see what the sudden illumination would reveal. An attendant draws near, and he is compelled to abandon his project.

In due time the display takes place. The dancers rush out of the ball-room and jump on to the chairs and tables. The glare so much like daylight cruelly reveals the artificiality of the complexions of the charming grisettes. The rouge stands out in ugly red splashes on the mottled chalk and powder. The girls realise this, and laugh a good deal at their own expense. They shriek with delight as the Catharine-wheels revolve, as the rockets soar upwards, as the set-piece, bit by bit, slowly emerges into being. Expressions of breathless admiration are heard on all sides. Girls upheld by stalwart students murmur almost tearfully, "Ah! que c'est beau! c'est ravissant!" Everybody is happy and willing to be amused. Good Englishmen

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(there are not many at the Bullier) are annoyed at this. When they consider the shameless and improper capers of these erring damsels, they feel that this air of innocent enjoyment is out of place. In melodramas at Clapham and Hammersmith girls who do these things, and kick up their heels too high, are represented wild-eyed and conscience-stricken, and as throwing themselves at last into the Round Pond or over Waterloo Bridge, tortured by remorse and shame.

You enter into conversation with a middle-aged man seated at your table. He knows all the *cocottes* by name, and rather glumly points them out to you. The tall woman is called Bec de Gaz, because she is nearly as high as a lamp-post; the Jewess is named Dinah; the lady with the opulent bosom, Lisette; another lady is the model of a famous sculptor; her companion is, or has been, the mistress of an equally well-known poet. "Does monsieur come here often?" you ask. "Not very often; perhaps once a month; youth must have an end, *voyez-vous*." "The Saturday and Sunday dances—are they worth coming to?" "Hardly. The crowd is then very mixed. You will see a great many of the nurses from the

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neighbouring hospitals, for instance.” You are interested. “Our hospital nurses are pretty, are these?” “Mon Dieu, non!” The answer is most emphatic. You tremble lest unkind fate should ever send you to a French hospital.

At midnight—an early hour for Paris—it is all over, and the merry crowd troops out on to the boulevard. A good many couples resort to the Closerie des Lilas opposite; others make their way down the boulevard to the Gare de Sceaux, and still further to the cafés. You follow some of the livelier students, perhaps, to the American bar underneath the Taverne du Panthéon. The place is rather handsomely and snugly fitted up. Men of all sorts, ages and nationalities are lounging at the bar, and watching rather listlessly the antics of the *petites femmes* who take the place as belonging to them. They are intensely affectionate towards each other, these *filles de joie*, and waltz in pairs up and down the room, to the strains of a piano. It is Maxim’s on a small scale. A beautiful Spanish dancer in the pay of the establishment goes through some of the voluptuous measures of her country. A Spanish student, looking very like a monkey, springs up, and joins her in the dance. Breathless and panting,

## In the Quartier

he then comes to the pianist, and in abominable French requests him to play some Andalusian or Castilian air. An expostulation follows: "Mais, je suis français, vous savez!" declares the pianist. One of the *petites femmes* now intervenes, makes the musician give up his seat, and rattles off a favourite air to which her companions dance. Everywhere there is the same happy-go-lucky attitude towards life on the part of these women. They are too much interested in each other, too easily carried away by the enjoyment of the moment, to pay much heed to their legitimate prey. With the waiters and *personnel* generally they are on the friendliest and most familiar terms. They inquire after the health of their families, and exchange condolences on the slackness of trade. In the *vacances*, when the Quartier is very quiet indeed, *cocottes* have been known to play cards with the waiters, even with the *propriétaire* himself. The flower-seller is their accomplice rather than their friend; they urge you to buy them a rose or a camellia, and as soon as your back is turned sell it back to her at half-price. The same flower may be sold half-a-dozen times the same evening.

The *trucs*, by means of which the fair Parisi-

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enne exploits her foreign admirer, are all pretty well known now, and indeed she finds the Englishman and the German warier and more *rusé* than her own countrymen. The Frenchman learns by experience, the foreign tourist has come armed with all the accumulated knowledge and experience of his predecessors, retailed in book form for his benefit. The lady who sits by him and having run up a big bill departs brusquely, leaving him to settle it, plays an ill turn to the *restaurateur*, not to him. In very deliberate French he points out that the waiter knew perfectly well that he was unaccompanied, and that he had ordered nothing for the lady; his British calm or German stolidity is proof against the excited remonstrances of the proprietor; he is ready with his card, and proposes to go with monsieur in a *fiacre* to the nearest *commissaire* of police, to settle the matter. Monsieur growls and gives way, sighing for the days of Mr Ledbury and the English milord.

It is not fair to suppose that all the pretty women sitting outside the cafés are capable of such tricks. Very few of them are. They are courteous, gentle, and kindly in bearing. You marvel at their patience as you sit beside them between one and two in the morning, when hope

## In the Quartier

deferred must surely be making their hearts sick beneath their artfully-manufactured complexions and gallant bearing. The sands of pleasure are running out now, and there is little chance of "anything turning up" to-night. The idiot of the boulevard comes along, and tells the lady beside you something about "Deux petits oiseaux—ils perchent sur son doigt." She laughs at his simple, childish pleasure, and you turn like her to admire the birds which an itinerant vendor succeeds at last in selling for a five-franc piece to a quartette farther down the *terrasse*. Then comes the winkle woman, and the weary *cocottes* recruit their flagging energies with those odious molluscs. (I presume they are molluscs.) It is a sad sight to see such dainty ladies so engaged—eating winkles with a pin! Sad and disillusioned, you rise, pay for your *consommation*, bow perhaps to the lady, and stroll along the boulevard. The cafés are nearly empty now. The gentlemen from the *rive droite* yawn, pinch the cheeks of their prattling companions, and call for their bills. Girls entwine their arms around them and entreat them to stay. Most of the men shake their heads, and despite pouts and protests, jump into the cabs that await them—alone. Now and



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again, after a whispered consultation a man and a girl go off together. The waiters rest their heads wearily on their hands, rouse themselves and go round collecting dominoes, cards, empty glasses, cups and bottles. A few couples sit about the room at wide intervals, earnestly talking, as people do talk at this time of night. They seem in no hurry to depart. At last, as the clock strikes two, they also depart. The shutters are pulled down; the café closes for three or four hours. Even the waiters sleep. . .

There is a pastry-cook's at the corner of the Rue de l'Ecole de Médecine, which is open all day and all night. Thither drift all sorts of people when the cafés have closed—the women who have not found partners, students intoxicated with their own verbosity (and something even stronger), odd-looking outcasts, impossible to classify, all alike wide-awake and reluctant to go to bed. There is something unnatural and ghastly in this noctambulist habit. Multitudes of Parisians seem to have acquired the habits of owls and bats, and to come alive only when the sun has gone down. There they sit, munching rolls and pastries, drinking strong coffee and hot milk till the first streaks of dawn appear behind the Panthéon. Outside, belated market-

## In the Quartier

carts file in slow procession towards the Halles. As you walk home, the sinister, ragged figure of a woman approaches out of the darkness, and whispers some invitation. She slinks away, and you seem to be the only living thing on the boulevard. No, against the kiosk a boy is sleeping, and there is a suggestion of reluctance in his uncomfortable attitude, in his nodding head. He wanted to keep awake, to feast his eyes on all "the gaiety." It strikes you as all rather hectic and silly. A little further on you meet a group of workmen waiting for the first tram-car. You wonder if they, too, have only slept since the last café closed. The rumbling of carts is heard. The *chiffonniers* become more numerous; old women are seen trotting off to early Mass. The Quartier rubs its tired eyes, and stifling a yawn, begins it all over again.

Musical critics will not find much to delight them in the orchestras of the boulevard, yet they sometimes number in their ranks students at the Conservatoire, who thus earn the cost of their musical education. A year or two ago there was a young South American who played the 'cello for so many hours a day to provide for the training of his younger brother, for whom he presently obtained a similar position. A rich

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Yankee widow "doing the Quartier" was struck by the elder youth's handsome face, and came to listen to his music night after night. At last she sent him a note asking him to dine with her. Looking forward eagerly to a good dinner, he at once accepted. Before the meal was finished, the widow offered him marriage, a proposal which he embraced with enthusiasm. And the younger brother continues to play at the café in the expectation of another rich American widow presenting herself.

Life in the Latin Quartier has been the theme of innumerable works ever since Murger invented Bohemia. We may confidently say it was resuscitated by Du Maurier. The French students are hardly as conscious of the traditions of their order as are the English and Americans; the latter especially make strenuous efforts to live the life Bohemian. The New Englander *en Bohème* is a singular and diverting spectacle. Much of "the gaiety" in the studios makes the Englishman yawn; much of "the fun" appears to him downright vulgarity. The first appearance of a new model is at some art classes the occasion for a great deal of brutal caddishness. While the poor girl, encouraged by experienced models, is divesting herself of her clothing, half-



A "Croquis" Class.



## In the Quartier

dying with shame, the students crowd round and criticise her form and the various articles of her attire with piquant humour. Finally, when the miserable little victim has mounted the platform, it is considered funny to make her assume grotesque, not to say indelicate, poses. However, this sort of thing is not general, and would not have been mentioned here if an American writer had not spoken of such episodes as "funny."

The Parisian student of good family lives pretty much like other Parisians, dressing decently, studying hard, and spending a great deal of his time at the cafés. But the Poles, Russians and Americans have set the fashion in eccentric costumes and mannerisms to a large number of provincial students, who go about very unkempt and seedy. The oddest little creatures some of them are, like the men of the woods in the German fairy tales. Jovial they are not, nor are they distinguished by geniality or courtesy. They—like all the students—are actively interested in politics, and you see notices all over the Quartier emanating from the Union de la Jeunesse Royaliste, or from the Union de la Jeunesse Socialiste. The former body appears to confine its efforts to breaking

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up meetings where little resistance is to be expected, and carries on an active propaganda by means of labels and placards in places where it would hardly seem reverent to pronounce a royal name. The Union Socialiste keeps a vigilant eye on public affairs, and assists in the organisation of meetings on a large scale. The French public meeting differs in several particulars from ours. At the door you are beset by women offering you badges, which they invite you to buy for the good of the cause. The newsvendors also ask you to give what you can with the same object. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that the money you may spend in this way will not find its way into the coffers of this or any other cause. Inside the entrance you are called upon to pay five sous, or ten sous as the case may be, as the price of admission. Free meetings are hardly the rule. This restriction, notwithstanding, you find the hall packed to suffocation. Women—at the Socialist meetings at all events—are much more numerous than on similar occasions in England. Beautiful girls many of them are—these disciples of Louise Michel, these young priestesses of liberty. Nor have the audience left their humanity outside the hall. The men and women press each

## In the Quartier

other's hands and draw closer together as the orators inflame their ardour in the common cause. They feel they are not only lovers but comrades. The women have not come here only to please the men. The crowd fills every part of the hall and surges up to the foot of the platform. The men are nearly all smoking. All sorts and conditions are here—jolly red-faced workmen in their *bérets* and blouses, gnome-like students, trim professors from the Sorbonne, weedy-looking shop-assistants, Poles and Russians, Spaniards, even a few Englishmen. The platform seems unduly crowded with orators, who are in no haste to begin. They receive the rudest adjurations from the audience, who presently vent their impatience in repeated salvos of hand-clapping: "One, two, three, four . . . four! One, two, three, four . . . four!" But when the chairman rises he has great difficulty in getting a hearing. The orators are numerous, and succeed each other rapidly. They speak very much to the point, which happens to be the misdeeds of the Spanish Government. Grave professors of the Sorbonne use expressions concerning a reigning sovereign which would be voted extremely bad taste in Brixton and New Southgate. These men would



## The Night Side of Paris

have said rude things to the face of his imperial majesty, Tiberius Cæsar. We are accustomed to pride ourselves on the freedom of speech that obtains with us, but we never dreamed of such freedom as this. Meanwhile not only the language but the atmosphere becomes almost sulphurous. Men freely divest themselves of their coats, open their waistcoats, and loosen their collars. "Quelle chaleur, mon Dieu!" everyone murmurs. Tempers also become heated. A man leaving his seat finds it occupied on his return. He menaces the intruder with his clenched fist. "Strike, if you dare!" says the man in possession. "Taisez-vous donc!" testily exclaim the bystanders, and the combat is not allowed to proceed as it would prevent the orators being heard. Questions and interruptions are not as frequent as at English meetings. The audience is enthusiastic, and not over-critical. The oratory has inflamed everyone's ardour to a high degree. At the conclusion of the meeting a workman in the gallery shouts, "Allons à l'ambassade!" The crowd below look at him; for a moment there is an awkward silence; and then they laugh. You see how riots and revolutions are made. Half an hour more of oratory, and they might have taken up the cry "A l'am-

## In the Quartier

bassade!" As it is, the crowd pushes and struggles into the street in the classic French fashion, singing the *Internationale*. The authorities have taken no risks. There is a large force of police at the door, who repeat incessantly, "Avancez! Circulez donc!" In a side street is drawn up a squadron of dragoons. But there is no bloodshed to-night. The crowd melts away, there is a rush to board the Odéon 'buses, and the students betake themselves to their favourite cafés to continue the political discussion till two a.m.

They have also their own semi-private conferences where their *monômes* and demonstrations of a more serious character are arranged. The anarchist students never fail to expound their doctrines on these occasions. They are often mild young men as far as manner goes, but experience has proved that they are capable of carrying their most violent principles into practice. "Do you approve of Henri throwing a bomb into a café full of unsuspecting people?" asks an English Socialist of one of these extremists. "I think it was impolitic," is the reply. "You might have gone further and said it was even impolite," bitterly rejoins the islander.

The Tivoli, Vauxhall, is often the scene of

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stormy meetings. Free fights are common between the different wings of the Socialist party, and the anarchists. That the two should ever be found on the same platform could only be explained by some wonderful paradox; for what in the name of reason is there in common between those who hold that the state should own and control everything, and those who don't believe in any state at all?

Your student is a rebellious fellow, and is against the Government, or at least against authority, whether he calls himself Republican, or Royalist, Socialist, or Anarchist. The most serious outbreak of which he was the promoter had no political significance at all. Most of us can remember the riots of June 1893, when barricades were thrown up in the Rue Bonaparte, and the students were dispersed only by force of arms. In the Café d'Harcourt a young man was struck on the head by a stone match-box, thrown it is said, by the police, and died a few hours afterwards. The cause of it all was the prosecution of the promoters of the famous Bal des Quatre Arts. The Quatre Arts (difficult words to say, hence the introduction of the *z*) were painting, sculpture, architecture and poetry. The ball was instituted to replace the Bal des

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Incohérents, at which everyone was expected to act like an idiot, even if he was not one naturally. Idiots may have become fewer or it may have become impossible to distinguish between them and the rest of the population. The Bal des Incohérents was danced for the last time in 1891. Then the Quatz Arts sprang into existence, initiated by the students of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and in imitation of the dances organised every year by the students of the other faculties. The first ball was a great success; the second not less so. A tableau representing the Triumph of Venus was the principal event of the evening, the beautiful model, Manon, appearing in the title-role in the costume in which the goddess arose from the waves. This sounds very shocking, but it must be remembered that the tableau was designed by artists for artists, and for all the male spectators had neither more nor less significance than some *chef-d'œuvre* of Rodin or Renoir. The tableau appealed in short to the æsthetic sense and to the critical faculties, and if an unpleasant comparison may be used, was no more indecent than the examination of the human form by students of anatomy. The authorities, however, could not see the thing in this light, and, as has

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been said, they thought fit to interfere, with more serious results than they had anticipated.

In the end they gave way, and the Bal des Quatz Arts is danced every year at the Moulin Rouge or the Elysée, Montmartre, or at some other convenient hall on the Butte. It is a strictly professional function. None but a student of a recognised *atelier* is admitted on any pretence whatever. Applicants are scrutinised by a masked committee, and these of doubtful *bona fides* are shown a door which opens into the next street. Equally stringent are the rules as to costume. Fancy dress, as we say, is absolutely insisted upon. Evening dress, ordinary military uniforms, dominos, clerical attire, blouses and cycling suits are specifically barred. Students are urged to exercise their ingenuity and to stimulate their fancy so as to make of the ball a vision of the beautiful and the splendid. They are also invited to secure the attendance of as many of the fair sex as possible. The ladies, if not students themselves, are generally models, chorus-girls, or members of less reputable professions.

The evening of the ball as you sit at your dinner on the Boulevard Raspail or the Boul' Mich', the restaurant is invaded by hordes of



The Night of the Quatz Arts.



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Roman warriors in glittering casques and forty-franc overcoats, who are followed by admiring and yelling crowds of children. A cab drives up, and out of it get four Gaulish tribesmen, smoking cigars. They fraternise with the warriors and eat with the voracity of your true barbarian. They spring to their feet with exclamations of welcome, as three new-comers appear. These are Roman damsels, whose flowing robes are held sufficiently high to display charming calves set off by red garters. But why garters, since the fair patricians wear no hose? The ladies are escorted by a chief who holds an umbrella over them. His dignity is outraged by a *gamin* who pulls off his flaxen beard and runs down the boulevard waving it aloft. The chieftain tucks up his skirt, displaying some rather loud-checked cycling knickers, and pursues the urchin, whom he trips up with his umbrella. His beard readjusted, he eats his dinner with a hearty appetite, and you presently see him driving off with his fair friends, one of them perched on his knee.

The same scenes are repeated at all the cafés and restaurants in the Quartier. The *cocottes* at the Harcourt appreciate the opportunities for larking the function affords, and strut about



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with the casques of the warriors cocked on their curly heads. The fun is childish, but unrestrained and genuine. The French have now, as always, the happy knack of playing the fool without any self-consciousness. The incongruity of their garb delights the students. Who cannot realise the rapture of wearing an overcoat over a Roman toga, and of wielding a pilum in one hand and an umbrella in the other? Such a situation is almost as full of pure, rich enjoyment as blacking your face or sliding downstairs on a tea-tray. Cheering, yelling, singing, the masqueraders board the omnibuses at the Odéon and the Place St Michel, and traverse the city amid the plaudits of the populace. The ball itself is always a great success. Champagne is given to the prize-winners, and to note the state of effervescence of the motley crowd that emerges from the ballroom when all is over, we should imagine to the losers as well. The return from the ball is almost the best part of the show. It is generally accomplished on foot. Much of the gaiety is spontaneous, some is organised. Arrived at the Place du Carrousel or before the Grand Palais, the girls, some of them almost nude by this time, are helped up on to statues and pedestals, and pose anew to the wondering

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delight, and no little excitement of the few people abroad at this early hour, and of the virtuous bourgeois peeping from behind his bedroom curtains. All sorts of tricks are played on these occasions. Troops at exercise in the cool June morning are surprised by haughty Roman officers of Cæsar's army, who give them the words of command, while Vercingetorix or Brennus shouts to them to repel the proud invaders. The officers of the French Republic meanwhile good-naturedly stand aside and exchange pleasantries with the pretty models and *étudiantes*. The police, of course, come in for a great deal of chaff. A joke on a more elaborate scale was played on such an occasion some years ago. Somewhere on the line of the procession there were two niches or pedestals awaiting statues. The authorities found these on the morning after the Quatz Arts occupied by two busts—one representing La Pudeur (Modesty), the other representing *Le Pudeur* in the likeness of M. Béranger, the senator who has rendered himself so obnoxious to the students by his efforts to enforce decorum and propriety. The jollification does not end with the morning after the ball. It is continued all the next day, and you may come across fantastically attired students

## The Night Side of Paris

swaggering about the cafés for days afterwards.

M. Béranger, the special butt of the Quartier, has done some good in his time. To him is due in large measure the purification of Paris from much of the gross indecency and libertinism for which it was once notorious. You have to go out of your way nowadays to be shocked, and the indecent post-cards and pictures are disposed of chiefly to foreigners. Even the senator's interference with the artists' ball was in a measure justified, for the exhibitions of the nude were repeated at a ball given in professed imitation of the Quatz Arts by a body which could not be called artistic. Some unpleasant scenes took place, and Manon, finding the atmosphere very different from that of the studio, is said to have thrown a cloak over her charms and to have hurried away. Nowadays the nude is *in principle* prohibited by the committee of the Quatz Arts.

There are certain establishments—happily less numerous every year—called Brasseries de Femmes, which externally resemble ordinary cafés or *brasseries*, but the interiors of which are discreetly concealed by curtains or glazed windows. They can, in fact, only be distinguished



In the Quartier.



## In the Quartier

by a signboard announcing that the establishment is conducted by Madame Euphrosine, or some such name, and that you are waited on by ladies in costume. On entering, you are promptly annexed and conducted to a seat by a lady whom you would hardly have described as in any costume at all—a fact you are the more disposed to regret as she is by no means fair to look upon. Poor women! *ex-cocottes*, too old and faded for the boulevards, they render themselves only the more grotesque and frightful by their attempts to charm and ogle. They throw their arms round the stranger, and press drinks upon him, for which, it is hardly necessary to say, he has to pay. The whole scene—the den reeking with tobacco-smoke, the ugly, half-naked women, the stupid half-drunken men—is disgusting and offensive to the most hardened boulevardier. You would have to visit certain quarters in Cairo to find anything comparable to one of these places that could be named.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LUNA PARK—SOME POPULAR FETES

IN a city which boasts that it offers more facilities for enjoyment than any other place on earth, it may well be asked what amusements are provided for the family parties so well catered for in England. The public balls are festivals of Venus; the theatres, for the most part, are consecrated to her cult; an air of dissipation clings to the *caveaux* and cafés concerts. Where do careful mammas take their daughters? Where can the jaded Parisian for an evening find relief from the eternal preoccupation of the city?

Well, nowadays the city is not so badly off in this respect. The time-honoured institutions of Earl's Court and West Kensington have been imitated with some success at the Porte Maillot. The Luna Park, with a frontage recalling the White City, attracts multitudes nightly from all parts of Paris. It is our annual "Exhibition" on a very small scale. You pay a franc for admission, except on certain days, when the price

## The Luna Park

is trebled, and notice that the ticket entitles you to "one attraction free." You find yourself in a relatively small enclosure with very little space for the promenade. In front of you is the basin and steep incline of the water-chute. You remember sweet Brompton, and gaze around. On your right is that other familiar feature, the *montagnes russes*. To the left, attractions of all sorts, very much crowded together. The band, that great feature of Earl's Court, hardly makes itself heard. You discover it at last in a corner at the end of a platform reserved for dancing. You make the tour of the whole place in ten minutes, and wonder what people can find to do here. You sit down by the basin and watch them. They commence to come in in good numbers at nine; by eleven, it is hardly possible to move, provided the night be fine. It is a thoroughly French crowd—you hear hardly a word of any other language. As you expected, monsieur and madame, with their two children and the *bonne*, are much in evidence. How proud Frenchmen are of being fathers! You wonder why they don't assert the privilege more often. Beside them you remark a good many young married couples, not hesitating to express their fondness for each other in public.



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Then there are middle-aged gentlemen with young girls,—probably their nieces,—mothers with their grown-up daughters; here and there two or three men, for once content without the society of the other sex; sweethearts, and more rarely still a student from the Quartier with his girl. On the whole it is a well-dressed crowd, but you see few men in evening-dress, and you frequently meet with parties of country-folk, with the old women wearing their frilled caps. The haughty damsels of seventeen, who come up from the suburbs and parade Earl's Court in pairs are nowhere to be seen. It is a type this—the *matinée* girl, the tea-shop girl, the picture-postcard girl, by whichever name you may call her—unknown at Paris. The young girl here is still very much of a child, and keeps close to her mamma. “The flapper” is not yet a force in French society; and the young girls that are here, like Frenchwomen in general, regard you with a friendly, kindly air, and do not assume the idiotic airs of “Dear Lady Disdain,” and of Mr Stanley Weyman's ill-tempered heroines.

The resemblance of this place to Earl's Court you presently realise is external only. The atmosphere is more that of a village fair.

## The Luna Park

These people have come here to have some fun, not to stroll about, showing off their dresses, ogling the girls, and seeing who's here. If we English take our pleasures sadly, we also take them flirtatiously. Our places of amusement are often exhibitions of secondary sexual characteristics. Here everyone seems to have become a child again. Ear-piercing yells announce that the water-chute is receiving a goodly meed of patronage; though it is an ordinary week-night, you have to wait your turn in a very long queue for admission to the *montagnes russes*, or scenic railway. But the most fun is to be obtained on the other side it would seem. You press forwards through the laughing crowd, and suddenly your hat is blown off your head by a violent blast of air, to the huge delight of the bystanders. They surround a man in uniform, who manipulates a revolving funnel, which seems to communicate with the caves of Æolus. He makes capital sport. Bold men face the blast, declaring that their hats will not be blown off. But as they turn their heads, the draught catches them at an angle, and hey, presto! their hats are flying over the heads of the throng. Everybody, including the victims, enjoys the joke immensely. But the eyes of all are turned now

## The Night Side of Paris

towards a little bridge, over which the men unkindly persuade the girls to pass. Immediately the draught is turned on them and plays the deuce with their petticoats. The louder they scream, the more frenziedly do the spectators applaud. In this free exhibition of stockings and frills there is something particularly edifying to a Parisian crowd. You are reminded of the like boisterous foolery that went on round the flat-iron building at Olympia, three or four years ago. Here the girls are bolder, or have less reason to be ashamed of their legs, and run the gauntlet once or twice. One of them is actually held in the middle of the bridge by her two swains, with results that may be imagined. Often the operator plays a trick on the onlookers, and just at the moment they expect him to turn the draught on a girl crossing the bridge, he turns it full on them. No one seems to see anything vulgar in this exhibition. It is all frank, hearty enjoyment. The women, most of all, delight in the discomfiture of their sisters. "Mais c'est surtout amusant voir passer une bonne femme!" one lady—herself a victim—tells her companion. Close by, unending amusement is afforded by what I may term a waggling staircase. The infernal contrivance is no doubt familiar to most

## The Luna Park

of my readers. Up it bravely mount beautifully dressed women, old ladies, delightful little girls, men and boys of all ages and sorts. It seems a hazardous business. When anyone loses courage half-way, his faint-heartedness excites roars of laughter. A fall gives still more amusement. Having reached the top some of the girls have not the pluck to come down again. Their escorts gallantly encourage them, and assist them down, while hardly able to accomplish the feat themselves. One fat man walks up and down, smoking a cigar, as if it were the grand staircase at the Opera. It is amusing to notice his air of dignified and conscious superiority. Then there is the knowing man who pauses and watches the thing, then having mastered the idea, descends quickly and gracefully, and the airy, dashing youth, who attempts the feat without consideration, and fails miserably.

It is good to watch this good-humoured French crowd so frankly childish, so absorbed in the pastime of the moment, so oblivious of all questions of dignity, so forgetful—as the English never are—of appearance and social position. You can see them best from the café in the gallery overhead, where you will also assist at lively

## The Night Side of Paris

altercations between the waiters and persons who wish to witness the moving spectacle below without ordering any refreshment. At these tables, as the hour grows late, you notice one or two *cocottes*. You are irritated. Can they not let the Parisian enjoy himself in childish fashion in this one place at least? You cross over to see the dancers. Here again what a contrast with Earl's Court! No ceremony, no gravity. Men from the clubs in their dress clothes take a turn with their fair companions, colliding with the clumsy post-office clerk, and his sprightly partner; an old lady waltzes with her middle-aged daughter; girls are dancing together; all caring just for the exercise and the fun of rhythmic movement, without asking themselves how they appear to the spectators, whether "it is the thing," or is "quite nice." Some of the couples present a comical appearance, one must admit. And you ask yourself how it is that Frenchwomen should be so pretty and Frenchmen so atrociously ugly.

I have a theory. It is because for centuries woman in this country has studied before all things the art of pleasing men; while man has, in consequence, become neglectful of his appearance, and lost the art of looking smart. Yet

## The Luna Park

pretty women ought to produce handsome sons . . . well, let us leave the problem to physiologists.

The merry-go-round is still revolving to the strident notes of the steam-organ as you leave—those *chevaux-de-bois* which have made the tour of France, and have been bestriden by men who now sit white-haired, perhaps, on generals' chargers. Surely there must be in us some drops of the centaur's blood, since youth in every land loves to clamber astride a steed. That round-about is strangely like one I saw on the sands at Haifa in Syria, making the delight of long-frocked young Turks and Arabs. Surely it cannot be the same. To-day very short-frocked little French girls ride upon it, and girls older and prettier, too, seated sometimes three on one horse, or clasped in front of their lovers—all the while, *en vraie Parisienne*, not neglecting the opportunity for a discreet display of shapely ankles and foaming lingerie.

I have compared Luna Park to Earl's Court. But the tone of the place, its atmosphere (to employ a hard-worked word) is very different. Except on a Bank Holiday, or on that saturnalia, the closing night, where is decorum more surely throned than in those courts and halls evoked by

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the magician Király? Even in the dancing-hall—a melancholy sign of decadence! the etiquette is as strict as that of the court of the most Catholic king. The London shop-girl does not regard a dance as a form of amusement, but as a genteel exercise. And aristocracy shuns Earl's Court—or goes in the afternoon (who knows?)—or sits, or used to sit, in pallid splendour and cold dignity within the enclosure of the Welcome Club. At one time people used “to make up parties” to go to Earl's Court. At least people used to propose to do so. If you had your own party you could keep away from the horrid common people. Well, parties of quite nice people do go to the Luna, but they have no hesitation in mixing with the nasty, common people. Snobbery, a plant which certain Anglomaniacs are endeavouring to acclimatise on French soil (and with every hope of success) has indeed set apart certain days as “select,” here and at the Palais de Glace and other places. If we set apart a select day, no one would go in England on any other. But though this is not a select day, we meet, going out, with a select, nay, fashionable party. The men—rare sight in Paris—are in correct evening dress, the ladies real *femmes du monde*.

## The Luna Park

They chatter as delightedly and excitedly as Joan and Colin coming from the fair. Do they summon their princely equipages and drive off to their palaces at the west end of the Boulevard St Germain? No, they all drop into a little *brasserie* round the corner, where the ladies seat themselves at the side-tables, and the men besiege the bar, clamouring for beer and sandwiches and *gaufres*. The ordinary *habitues* of the place seated on stools round the bar—men in casquettes, women *en cheveux*, stare a little curiously at the invaders—but otherwise the presence of the fashionable party does not disturb the ordinary routine of the establishment. The ladies throw back their furs and stare curiously, in their turn, at the people round them, remark to each other on the beauty of an *ouvrière* in a red blouse, with that frank and almost professional recognition of other women's charms characteristic of the Parisienne. Imagine such an irruption into an English bar! The sneers of the barmaids, the "yahs!" of the toppers, the mingled shamefacedness and superciliousness of the party themselves. There is nothing of that here. The fashionables drink their beer with relish, call for more, and criticise the *gaufrettes*. They rapturously recall the sen-



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sations of the chute and the *rapides*. They rise at last, and make for the door. "Bon soir, mesdames, bon soir, messieurs," says the girl behind the bar, just as she says it to the *charbonnier* and the *cocher* and his family. "Bon soir, mademoiselle, bon soir," shout the gallants. They join their ladies on the kerb, where their progress is arrested by a bicycle race. The road is good at this point, and as it is late at night, some sporting youths have selected the moment and the spot to match their strength against each other. They pass at the rate of thirty miles an hour, talking and shouting to each other, as French folk always do when dancing, cycling, or rowing. The party hail three *autos* and disappear from view. Who shall say that republican institutions have not taken deep root in France?

Coney Island begat the Fun City, and the Fun City begat Luna Park. Similarly New York begat the Roller Skating Rink and it passed on to London, and has now been reproduced at Paris. There is to be a rink at the Tabarin, another at the Moulin de la Galette. At the moment these lines are written, there is a rumour that Bullier will not re-open its doors. Can it be that its transformation into a rink is

## The Luna Park

in contemplation? Skating on wheels has caught on in the two great capitals. It should be especially popular in Paris. The Parisian loves amusements fraught with possibilities of adventure and promiscuous acquaintances; and how easy it is to make a girl's acquaintance at a rink? You mark out the fair one, skate into her, knock her down, pick her up, readjust her skates, and every time you see her again renew your apologies and kind inquiries. No one can do this sort of thing more gracefully than the Parisian. Then, the Parisienne has unrivalled opportunities for showing off her grace, her elegance, her costume, her ankles, and her hosiery. I predict a great future for the skating-rink in France. In London, the Olympia, the Empress and the Aldwych do not seem to diminish in popularity, despite the Englishman's fear of making himself ridiculous, as you are pretty sure to do when you start to acquire a knowledge of the art of roller-skating. But the Frenchman has no such fear. His movements may resemble those of a runaway steam-roller or an aeroplane with its propeller jammed, but he is entirely indifferent to the merriment they create.

As in London, ice skating in Paris is no new

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pastime for the well-to-do. The Palais de Glace on the Champs Elysées has long played a more important part in Parisian fashionable life than the Prince's has done in our West End. In the afternoon, especially Friday afternoon, you may see a very brilliant gathering there, on the ice and off it. The people you see at the Madrid even condescend to go there. They don't all skate, though the *grande dame* generally skates well. The *cocotte* goes there too, and outshines all the others by her performances—especially, as often happens, if she comes from Russia or Scandinavia.

The Parisians, fondly supposed to be the most corrupt and artificial of mortals, are apt to astonish foreigners by their childlike delight in the simplest forms of pleasure. The fair at Neuilly—that suburb beloved of Louis Philippe and English folk—year after year attracts not only the *calicot* and his *petite amie* and the good bourgeois, but the *vieux marcheur* and the *femme du monde*, and the *demi-monde*. For a fortnight the long main street leading to the Porte Maillot is hedged for a good mile by shows, booths and all the paraphernalia of the itinerant showman. Short and Codlin and Mrs Jarley reign supreme. The unfortunate inhabitants



## The Foire de Neuilly.



## The Luna Park

of the suburb are kept awake far into the small hours by the ear-splitting noise of the steam-organ, the big drum, and the gramophone. The street, in the evening at least, is densely packed with representatives of every class and age in the department of the Seine. They regale themselves with these horrible comestibles—gingerbreads mostly—that only the itinerant confectioner happily can produce. They patronise all the entertainments in turn. Some of the swings and merry-go-rounds strike one as rather dangerous contrivances, but the Parisian counts a broken head or limb as nothing at moments like these. What's the odds so long as you are happy? Here is a revolving arrangement of swings suspended freely from chains. A genial youth with a close-cropped head and ears like a satyr's, clad in the low-necked black jersey of his class, balances himself in one of these, and with huge glee, seizes hold of the swing of the girl in front of him and hurls it violently from side to side. The girl screams, and the louder she screams the more the crowd enjoy the fun. The French are not a chivalrous nation. Or rather perhaps their chivalry applies only to children. The little ones are in great force here to-night, though many of the shows strike the

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Englishman as rather strong meat for youth. There is, of course, that disgusting exhibition, the Musée Dupuytren, devoted to vivid illustrations of anatomical monstrosities, of the processes of putrefaction, and of the most loathsome operations and diseases. The French would do well to remember the device—*Méchante mais gentille*. They delight in a great many things that are merely beastly and childish. Even on the roundabout, if you please, they are not content to ride on horses and all sorts of animals, but family parties must ensconce themselves in objects relegated elsewhere to the strictest privacy. At another show you are invited to witness a reconstitution of the hideous crime of the monster, Soleilland, and a life-like representation of the execution of some notorious criminal. The quadruple execution of the bandits of Béthune attracts an unending procession of sightseers. Let us hope it may do the budding apache good, though it is fairly certain that such sights blunt the moral sense and predispose the mind to crime rather than act as a deterrent. But you have not come here to moralise, though you will have abundant occasions for so doing. All the fun of the fair! The drums bang, the clowns and tumblers give

## The Luna Park

preliminary exhibitions of their powers before the booths, the lean, haggard *danseuses* skip about and leer—Walk up! walk up! Here is Professor Gorge de Fer, the sword-swallower; here the swallower of serpents, which are examined curiously by the audience; here the fasting man, who will sit here fasting beneath your very eyes—a wonderful and exciting spectacle. Next door is the Théâtre Français, manned, you are assured, by members of the staff of the better-known establishment of the same name. At this point the crowd is forced to make way for a motor-car, out of which jump two elegantly dressed ladies accompanied by a Parisian “swell” of the first water. The girls bound delightedly on to the *chevaux-de-bois*, a couple of apaches before them, and two bonnetless *ouvrières* behind. Away they go, while the gentleman in the shirt-front stands by, sucking his cigar, and regarding them with a somewhat dissatisfied air. He feels a little uncomfortable in these unwonted surroundings. After half-a-dozen revolutions the girls rejoin him and insist upon going over to the switch-back railway, the motor-car, snorting and bubbling, awaiting them the while. Nobody



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jeers at the fine ladies, or says "Yah!" to them, in our pointed, witty English way. The French are democrats. Another side of their character is exhibited where the avenue of booths is interrupted in front of a church. A party of youths, probably shop-assistants, kneel on the steps of the edifice in mock devotion, while one of them harangues them and dismisses them with a benediction. Somehow this episode does not strike you as funny. But the *foire de Neuilly* is an immensely popular institution, and must not be missed by those who would understand Parisian life and character.

The *fête* has had its tragedies, too. There is the story of the Crown Prince who took a fancy to a pretty mountebank he met here. He took her to his own country, and when he had done with her, she shot herself. Then there was the man-mummy (Castagna his name was, if I recall it right). He also took his own life, leaving behind him a letter which might easily bring tears to your eyes. The man, who "loved the beautiful and the noble," could no longer endure the ignominy of his position; he was loved by no one in the world except his sisters, and they, it seemed, did not constitute a strong enough hold on life. So he retired from

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the booth and the larger stage of life. He left his body to the doctors, hoping that it might be of use to science.

Science! humanity! *la patrie!* The French have dethroned the gods of their fathers, but there are many divinities still on their altars. Can we imagine an English mountebank thinking in the hour of his death about science, or a British criminal talking in the dock, or on the scaffold, about humanity? Lately, it is true, the middle-class have begun to talk about the Empire—we have forgotten the word fatherland—and they are not without reverence for its symbols—a slouched hat with a feather in it and a pair of khaki leggings.

Another popular festival, but of a different sort, is the *fête des fleurs*. This takes place during the week preceding the Grand Prix. It lasts twodays, and attracts thousands to the corner of the Bois allotted to it. The charge for admission is devoted to charitable purposes. As the name implies, it is a carnival of flowers, and every vehicle, from the costermonger's barrow to the swell *cocotte's* automobile, is loaded with blossoms. We say the swell *cocotte*, because the *fête*, unlike that of Neuilly, is rather shunned

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by the *femme du monde*. There are flowers, flowers everywhere — a vigorous battle of flowers, festoons of flowers swinging across the paths — altogether a pretty sight. And a popular one.

## CHAPTER V

### SUNDAY EVENING IN PARIS

It is odd to find French writers complaining that Sunday is a dull day in Paris, when the people can find little better to do than to show off their best clothes and to pass their time in endless, aimless promenades. It is a terrible day, we are told, for the children, who live the livelong day in mortal fear of soiling their Sunday clothes. “Y aura des gifles, s’il y aura des taches!” they are constantly reminded. As to shops, only the pastry-cooks’ are open—and the cafés, we might add. Thus does Sunday in Paris impress a native observer.

The Londoner does not find the day a dull one in the French capital. To begin with, the morning seems to him much like any other day. There is a great deal less ringing of church bells than in his own country, and if he lives near any of the great cemeteries, he will find the endless procession of funerals on this day a little depressing. But the remaining hours may be spent in every conceivable form of recreation and amuse-

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ment. It is the gala day at most of the theatres, and as to excursions there is a bewildering variety. Returning from Versailles or St Germain, you find the tram-cars and steamers packed with holiday-makers. At every stopping-place the car is attacked by a horde of savages, male and female, who fight, bite, kick and thrust, break open the locked barriers, and contemptuously and angrily disregard the protests of the conductors. The French are not seen at their best at such moments. If the Versailles car were the last means of escape from a doomed city, the people could hardly display more ferocious selfishness. That the women survive the ordeal at all says much for the vitality of their sex. Once aboard the tram, the light-hearted youth of the faubourgs entertain each other with obscene songs howled forth with the energy of steam-organs. These young gentlemen very much resent indifference to their efforts, and if you continue your conversation with a companion, unaffected by the din, they will approach as near as possible, and let you have the full volume of their voices full in your ear. The allusions in their songs in nowise embarrass the ladies, young and old, who smile approvingly, and occasionally applaud.

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The only decently behaved passengers are the blue-bloused *campagnards* and their wives, who survey the scene with bovine composure. The temper of the crowd is not wholly good-humoured. The Parisian is naturally quarrelsome. Nor has he any shamefacedness or consciousness of looking like a fool. A Londoner has to get very drunk before he can make himself as big a fool as these Parisian holiday-makers.

This sort of rowdyism is not, unhappily, confined to these excursions and merry-makings. The same brutal disregard for others' rights and feelings may be noticed every evening on the Metro., where stalwart workmen do not hesitate to knock elderly women out of their way with clenched fists. The Parisian, thanks perhaps to the influence of the *entente cordiale*, occasionally gives up his seat to a woman, but the practice is very far still from being general.

It is a relief to descend from the tram-car and to make your way through the quiet streets round the Place de l'Etoile, or the Luxembourg. The streets are very far from being deserted. If the evening is fine, the *concierge* will be seen sitting at his door, his hands clasped between his knees, leaning forward and serenely surveying the world. A small, lean cat dozes beside

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him; a mangy poodle, more alert, advances to examine every passer-by. The *concierge* has sat there since five; he has sat there in the same attitude, at the same hour, every Sunday for perhaps twenty years past. Sometimes his wife sits by him; more often she comes out at intervals, and stands beside him, while he communicates the impressions he has received during the last quarter of an hour. Further down the road, a more neighbourly group has collected. Just inside the *porte-cochère* the *concierge* is playing cards with his colleague from No. 39 *bis*, with the *charbonnier*, and the keeper of the *débit de tabac*. His wife this time occupies the seat by the door, and chaperons her daughter, over whom a dragoon leans with pleased solicitude. The *bonne* from No. 20, looking rather smart, as French *bonnes* can look on Sundays only, leisurely saunters up and down with the family *caniche* in tow. It might be a village street instead of a fashionable thoroughfare within a stone's throw of the heart of the city.

When it grows dark the *concierge* will put on his coat for the first time that day, and adjourn with his cronies to the *estaminet* at the corner, where they will continue their game, and become very excited in the course of it. Then they will

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be turned out about one o'clock, and seek their respective abodes.

The *concierge* ! Inevitable, essential, unnecessary feature in French town life ! Who invented him ? Who wants him ? Yet he shows no sign of disappearing. Why is this, we ask—we who have never known him, and get on so well without him. Why, the Englishman asks himself, should a man be unable to enter his own flat after eleven at night, without the consent of this tyrant ? There he is, installed with his wife, sometimes with a whole family, in a couple of rooms, to the right or left of the entrance to every house. The comings and goings of everyone in the house are noted by him ; he knows what company you keep, he inspects your correspondence. He knows all about your business, and is always ready to introduce you to a respectable baker, butcher, coal-merchant or laundress of his acquaintance. When you come back late you ring, and the door opens mysteriously ; the *concierge*, awakened from his dreams, has but to press a button at the head of his bed. And if you have quarrelled with him, he will recognise your touch of the bell, and you will be lucky if you have to wait less than half-an-hour. If you wish to leave the house



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after closing<sup>a</sup> time, you must shout “ *Concierge!* ” in a voice loud enough to awaken the Seven Sleepers, and if he is a curious *concierge*, he will peep through his little window, to see who it is that wishes to leave the house at this hour. Quarrel with anyone in Paris rather than with your *concierge* ! If you are so rash, he has a thousand ways of avenging himself. He will tell your friends that you are out of town; he will mislay your correspondence, he will refuse to take in the goods you have ordered. Why Parisians submit to this tyranny, Heaven knows. Perhaps for the reason we submit to the House of Lords, and other obsolete institutions—because we cannot imagine what things would be like without them. But you cannot escape from the *concierge* ; he is everywhere. The only way to enjoy complete freedom of movement in Paris is to become a *concierge* yourself.

The system affords no security against thieves. When the *concierge* hears the bell, he opens—sooner or later—the door. Burglars are thus saved the trouble of entering through the window. If an unusually conscientious *concierge* queries, “ *Qui est là?* ” the intruder has only to mention the name of one of the tenants.

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On one occasion, when new to my lodgings, I penetrated into the wrong house, and made the interesting discovery that my key fitted every *appartement* therein. Only when I had struck a match inside three separate flats, and satisfied myself that I was in the wrong house altogether, did I descend the stairs, and yell "*Concierge!*" The street-door opened noiselessly, and I was free to go—with a sheaf of sticks and umbrellas and half-a-dozen overcoats under my arm, if I had so willed. In Seville, and other Spanish towns, by the way, you have a curious variation of this system. The night-watchman or policeman has the keys of all the doors in the street, and to him you must apply for admission to your own house.

On a fine summer's evening everyone lives out of doors. At the corner of the Rue St Roch and the Rue St Honoré a girl comes forth from a shop, plants a bucket by the kerb, and fills it with warm water. Then she re-enters the shop, and presently emerges dragging a most reluctant terrier, whom she incontinently plunges into the bucket. With many words of encouragement and sympathy she forthwith scrubs him snow-white and pink. The whole of his martyrdom is consummated in the public street. When you

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have no back garden, where else can you wash your dog?

Where, too, can you skip? And so your progress down the Rue de Rivoli, or any other main thoroughfare is liable to interruption by a rope extended across the pavement, one end held by papa sitting at the shop-door, the other by *la grande* Berthe on the kerb, while *la p'tite* Nenie, in an extremely short plaid frock and white socks, skips with frantic energy. Happier are the children whom their more leisured parents have conducted to the gardens of the Elysée, the Tuileries, or the Luxembourg, where in the summer they may play far into the evening. The back garden does not exist in Paris, so there is little of that savage seclusion which Mr Bernard Shaw makes a reproach to the town-dweller. In the public gardens the men can smoke and read the paper, the women can gossip, the children amuse themselves much better than on a plot of ground sixteen feet by ten. The view, too, is perhaps superior to that of your own sweet-peas, though these represent your own industry and skill, with the neighbour's laundry displayed in the background. The Parisian is fond of his parks, and lives in them as much as possible, especially on Sundays.



On the Boulevards.



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The whole human comedy is played out in the Jardin du Luxembourg. There the infant Parisian is nursed by his mother; there he makes the acquaintance of the children of the quarter and has his first ride on the *chevaux-de-bois*; there, in the *vacances* he plays elaborate games with the other boys, and with big girls of his own age; there two or three years later, he finds himself for the first time talking love to some *étudiante* or model; there as the father of a family he watches his young brood disport themselves; there a lean and slippered pantaloon he passes the tedious years of his *retraite*, sitting for hours together in the sun criticising the Government and squabbling with his cronies.

The parks are better frequented in Paris than in London, among other reasons, because something is done to provide amusement for the little ones. Where the fashionable throng is densest in the Champs Elysées you find the inevitable merry-go-round, swings, and the *théâtre guignol* (the French Punch and Judy), patronised by scores of gleeful youngsters, whose beautiful mammas and beribboned *bonnes* stand attentively by. In a few of the parks under the control of the London County Council some attempts have been made in this direction; but

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to provide any distraction for the children in Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens would be regarded as profanation. In French parks you are not constantly besieged by little girls asking you the time—the time, poor mites, that seems to pass so slowly, charged as they are with the care of an infant in a perambulator, and one or two more little brothers and sisters. The French mother, you see, generally accompanies her children to their playground; the English mother has no time for such frivolity, her time, health, strength, and thoughts being absorbed by that wretched little two-storeyed house, the Juggernaut of our lower middle-class womanhood.

As it grows dusk the children are collected by their parents and nurses and convoyed homewards. The family groups take the same road, or are attracted by the scent of supper to the restaurants. The figures remaining on the seats are generally those of young men and women. More here even than elsewhere; Sunday night is the time for courting. There are no Saturday or Thursday half-holidays here; it is to-night only that the shop-assistant can spend the most delightful hours of the twenty-four with his *amie*. More discreet than the lovers *d'outre-Manche*,

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they are seldom surprised in a close embrace; in these public places you do not often catch the sound of a kiss. For that matter, the benches in the park are generally the resting-places of young persons who are too correct to enter the bar or the café, or to dance at the Tabarin or Bullier's. Nor do the shades of the Champs Elysées afford the same privacy as Hyde Park. The Bois de Boulogne after nightfall shelters, it is true, another sort of lover, and others than lovers. It is a spot highly interesting to the *police des mœurs*.

The grand boulevards are more crowded than ever to-night. If the evening is fine, you can proceed only at a snail's pace from the Place de l'Opéra to the Boulevard Sebastopol. The *cocotte* who, on other days, seems to have made the pavement her own, is hardly distinguishable in the crowd. But she is there all the same. The seats between the trees are all occupied—mainly by weary-looking work-folk, whose chiefest treat every week it is thus to contemplate the pageant of Parisian life. There is indeed plenty to divert them. There is the *appareil d'annonces cinématographique* opposite the Petit Casino. The cinematograph is brought into play to advertise various wares and enter-



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prises. You see a youth with baggy trousers shown the door contemptuously by an angry employer; next, you see him studying the shop-windows of MM. ——— et Cie; their marvellous costume, complete at forty francs, has caught his eye. You see him measured, arrayed, transformed; you note his rapture as he rushes into the street; the astonishment of his friends, their instant departure in automobiles for the same tailor. Easier of demonstration are the circular tours advertised by the railway companies. Sweet are the uses of advertisements! Here they are a source of delight to those who can pay for no pleasures, and of profit to the proprietors of the neighbouring restaurants and cafés.

The cafés! It is impossible to obtain a seat on the *terrasses*. The family parties you noticed but an hour ago in the Tuileries gardens have taken possession of the tables, and seem to have settled there for the night. Monsieur, with apparent indifference, watches the *cocottes* intermixed with other passers-by, and makes some jest concerning them to his wife. Yet among them, perhaps, he has not failed to recognise one or two acquaintances. The children are quite at home here, and stampede every now

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and again up the path between the tables, heedless of and unheeded by the customers. In the interior of the café the regular patrons have taken refuge, and just as on week-nights, except perhaps for the presence of an additional friend, are busy at their eternal game of *tric-trac* or *manille*. Tired of being wedged at a tiny table between the broad backs of two family men, who push their chairs ever more backward, you bang on the table and pay for your *consommation* according to the price marked on the saucer. Then you resume that promenade which becomes an irrisistible habit after a few days' sojourn in the capital of France. You join a group collected round a shabby young man who chalks the outline of a sphere on the asphalt. "There, ladies and gentlemen," he says, "you have the globe. You will observe that at each end is a pole. Before long no doubt the Docteur Coke and M. Péary will delight the audience of some Parisian *musico* by the recital of their experiences. For us in Paris, it is less easy to repose confidence in the policewho—" The young man breaks off in the midst of the sentence and walks into the crowd surrounding him. You turn and see a cyclist policeman, whose attention has been drawn to the crowd. His appearance

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at the psychical moment creates a good deal of amusement. What the young man intended to say you are left wondering. Probably all this talk about the poles was merely a prelude to the production of some worthless drugs supposed to be invested with magical healing properties.

You find a café less crowded than the others and pass in. Three men are playing cards at the next table. A girl is with them, and by her manner towards them, you suppose her to be an old friend or relation of one of them. You are encouraged in this impression when a fourth man approaches, and, having consented to join in a four-handed game, takes mademoiselle by the shoulders and quietly pushes her on to another chair. The girl watches the game for a few minutes; the men hardly seem aware of her presence, so intent are they on the game; she yawns and calls the waiter. She tells him that she is bored, and wants something to do. The waiter brings her a newspaper. She pretends to read it, and then throws it down. Then in the prettiest way imaginable, she edges up to one of her companions and begs him to lend her his note-book and pencil. She wants something to play with. The man good-naturedly complies. For a few minutes made-

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moiselle amuses herself with attempts to draw; then she yawns, taps on the table, pulls her friend's ear, and adjusts her stocking. Then she catches sight of a man watching her. She smiles archly, pouts, lowers her eyes; then raises them, smiles again, and passes over to the man's table, to your unbounded astonishment. The simple, babyish, innocent-looking girl, who seemed to be the daughter or sister of the quiet bourgeois playing whist, is another *cocotte* after all!

You resume your walk. Love reigns supreme to-night. At the corners girls are waiting for their omnibuses home. Young men smile at them and induce them to postpone their departure. They wander off together in the shadow of the Madeleine. Or perhaps they mount the 'bus, and with a mocking, backward glance, invite the swain to follow. He often does. Many a Parisian romance begins on the *imperiale* of an omnibus, to end?—well, sometimes in a plunge into the dark waters of the Seine.

The river is quiet to-night. The barges and steamers moored against the banks seem deserted by their strange population, who spend their life on the inland waters of France, voyaging

## The Night Side of Paris

through the long Burgundian tunnels, through the flat meadowlands of the Nord, between the forest-clad slopes of Berry. But to-night they are ashore, making good cheer at the four-sous restaurants near the Halles, or tasting the delights of city life in the drinking-shops near the Halle aux Vins.

The quays are patrolled by lads and lasses, going homewards from the gardens. In the shadow of Notre Dame a man is waiting. His impatient stride up and down, his repeated glances at his watch, enlist your interest. He is dressed ideally well; he is of the type to which belong the frequenters of the Café Americain and Maxim's. What is he doing here? Suddenly across the square walks a beautiful woman in a charming gown. The man rushes towards her, clasps her hand, and holds it in his while they converse in whispers. A prowling *cocher* draws near, scenting a fare. A moment's hesitation, a sign to the cabman, and the two jump in. The cab lumbers over the bridge. And so Notre Dame was chosen for the assignation?—no bad place either. The church door is the last place you would expect to meet anyone on a Sunday evening in Paris. The *salut*—the latest service—is generally over



**The Madeleine Corner.**



## Sunday Evening in Paris

by six o'clock or half-past, and the church bells are silent. How sombre, lonely and suggestive are these great temples, standing, some of them, in the very heart of living, loving, sinning Paris. Do the ghosts of the myriad dead Parisians collect within them and listen wistfully to the sounds of merriment outside? In the moonlight you might almost fancy that gargoyle was the face of some *noceur* of the old *régime* let out from Hell just to take a glance at the Heaven he so long ago quitted. In the silence of the churches you seem to read a confession of final failure. Their doors are shut; the lights extinguished; their bells give no tongue; they have given up all attempts to distract men from the tumult and temptations of the world that so loudly calls around them. I suppose there was a time when you could have seen Paris going to church on Sunday evening, hymn-books under its arm. You wonder what the priests are doing while all the world is in the streets. Do they sit in their sparsely furnished *appartements* and read their breviaries? Do they glance now and then from their windows at the people who dislike and despise them? It is more likely that they meet together for a little innocent conviviality, and to shake their heads, not too sadly, over the



## The Night Side of Paris

unregenerate state of France. You see infinitely fewer soutanes to-day in the streets of Paris than you did even ten years ago. M. Combes did his work very thoroughly. And with the relaxation of clerical control there has resulted a much greater freedom of manner, especially among the young folk. Only a few years ago you were not supposed to shake hands with an unmarried girl of good family; she was not allowed to go for a walk with her own *fiancé*; young girls were not permitted to play games with boys. Now things tend more and more to follow the English pattern. The girl who allows a stranger to talk to her on the top of the omnibus is not necessarily a girl of loose morals. In the gardens girls of fifteen and sixteen, belonging to good families, play games with lads of their own age, and not always, too, under the eyes of chaperons. In a few years' time the intercourse between the sexes of all ranks is likely to become freer even than it is among us.

## CHAPTER VI

### IN THE SLUMS

“ THIS life is most jolly,” you are disposed to agree with Amiens as you turn off from the glare and din of the boulevards, and pass down the Rue Montmartre. The Parisians know how to enjoy life, you reflect. The city hums with happiness. Suddenly you realise that, immersed in these pleasant meditations, you have taken a wrong turning. Surely this is not the city you were in but a moment ago. You find yourself in a narrow darkened lane, with filthy, black houses, exuding dirt and moisture, on either side. All the light there is comes from a *cabaret* at the corner, an evil-looking place, where you notice two men with flat caps conversing with obvious earnestness across a table in the corner. They have heard your footfall, and turn on you countenances that make you wish you had brought a revolver with you. Where are you? You recognise the form of a policeman, and with renewed confidence, ask him the name of the street. “ Rue St Martin.”

## The Night Side of Paris

“ Ah! And what is that group of men outside that miserable house yonder? ” The policeman smiles grimly and looks at you curiously. “ Ce sont des malheureux, monsieur, et la maison est leur hotel—l’Hotel Fradin! ” Your curiosity is excited, and you draw nearer. The policeman accompanies you, and you stand and watch the crowd. The men composing it pay no attention to you. They are of all ages, from ten to eighty and upwards, and their appearance betokens abject misery. Most of them are bare-footed; some wear overcoats that you would be ashamed to dress a scarecrow in, and these they hold closely round their skinny forms. A glimpse of flesh tells you that this garment is their only protection from the cold. Others wear the black jersey of the apache—cut low at the neck and armpits, revealing sinewy arms still capable of wielding a knife with the strength of desperate men. And their faces—on them is stamped in varying degrees all that can be registered of human suffering, hopelessness and vice. Young lads there are, scarcely more than children, whose faces are those of veterans in crime; old men again, from whose pallid features years of privation have not been able to efface all traces of dignity and intelligence—and

## In the Slums

these are the saddest sights of all. Sadder even than the children who press behind them, for these, at least, have the future. And, old and young, their eyes are directed with agonised longing towards the narrow door, over which burns a lamp illuminating the ironical inscription—*Hotel*. The door is abruptly shut as a man passes in. A groan goes up from the crowd. “Ten o’clock; I knew we should be too late!” sobs a boy near you. A black-browed ruffian curses and skulks away. An old man sighs wearily and stumbles away into the night. The crowd melts away. What is this place which these most wretched folk jostle each other to enter? It is the hotel conducted by M. Fradin and his amiable lady for the benefit of the poor and needy, and undoubtedly for the benefit of M. Fradin himself. “Can one see the place?” you ask the cloaked policeman, who all this time has been regarding the crowd with no un pitying eyes. “Assurément.” He taps on the door, and it is cautiously opened by a stout bull-necked *garçon*, who surveys you curiously. “Complet—” he begins. The policeman says something about visitors, and you enter in response to a gesture by the waiter. It is a noisome, gloomy wooden cave in which you find

## The Night Side of Paris

yourself. The only light appears to proceed from the desk at which M. Fradin himself is seated. He is a big man with a hard but not brutal face, and is clad in the flat cap of the Parisian workman. He also mutters something about "visitors," and you tender him a franc. In the background you dimly perceive the huddled forms of ragged men seated side by side on a wooden bench, so close together that one could not move his arm without disturbing his fellow. He has no need to: as you draw closer, you see that the poor wretches are sleeping with their heads bowed in their hands, and resting on a narrow table. Opposite them is another row; beyond this is another table, similarly occupied. The silence is broken only by the heavy breathing of exhausted men. The waiter beckons you, and you follow him up a rickety stair. You notice an inscription, "Gare aux voleurs!" and wonder whether it is put there for the benefit of visitors like yourself or the regular *habitues* of the establishment. *Peste!* you stumble over a man crouched with his head between his knees on a stair broader than the others. He opens his eyes, and with a grunt closes them again. The *garçon* shakes him, and tells him that he has no right to sleep

## In the Slums

there; but, catching the expression on the visitor's face, he leaves him and conducts you to the first floor. Here you see M. Fradin's guests disposed as downstairs—side by side, cheek-by-jowl, along a table. Frightful faces glare at you from the semi-darkness. “Un sou! charité!” whines a hideous old man. Your nostrils are assailed by the most sickening odours. Now and again a groan escapes from one of the sleepers, dreaming perhaps of the horrors of the morrow. One man snores loudly. Your guide, anxious to exhibit his authority, rudely awakens him. Holding his lamp so as to illumine the whole fetid chamber, he tells you proudly that the house often accommodates seven hundred guests in winter-time. There are five floors, all like this. Who are these people? “Unfortunates (*des malheureux*), but not all of them quite destitute. We have journeymen workmen, come to Paris in search of work; newsboys, cab-runners, all sorts.” “Sometimes rough sorts?” “*En effet*; but the police never trouble them here; and the patron knows how to keep order among them.” Your eyes have become accustomed to the semi-darkness, and you look searchingly around. One of the men has stripped himself stark naked, and lies, with

## The Night Side of Paris

the permission of his fellow-sufferers, it is to be supposed, full length on one of the tables. You visit the floor above. Here you are confronted by some of the most villainous countenances you are ever likely to meet. Better meet them here than outside, is your reflection. You catch snatches of conversation. Some make jokes about the vermin; others discuss in low tones—What? Probably some projected robbery. One feebly asks if anyone will sell him a sou's worth of bread. You stumble downstairs.

"Monsieur has not yet seen the kitchen." You don't much want to, but you glance at the steaming vats of coffee and bouillon. "For four sous a man gets a bowl of soup and can pass the night here," says the waiter, "till six o'clock in the morning. M. Fradin does that by way of philanthropy."

Philanthropy! Seven hundred lodgers at twenty centimes a head—that makes one hundred and forty francs a night; and even these poor devils are generally able to scrape together another four sous for a hunk of bread and a cup of coffee. The hospitable M. Fradin's receipts must amount to something like eight pounds sterling a night. Yet in a sense he is a public benefactor. The house affords at least



The Hotel Pradin.







The Rue de Venise.



## In the Slums

a refuge from the cold and the rain—and from the police; and what a haven it must seem to the miserable tramps who have to drag their ill-shod feet along the uneven pavements of Paris from dawn till eve. And there are no work-houses in France, where indeed the authorities make no systematic efforts, so far as I can perceive, towards dealing with the problems which a visit to Fradin's naturally recalls. You forget these problems at Maxim's and the Café Américain.

It is not a very safe or savoury quarter, this near the Rue Montmartre and the Boulevard du Temple, once you leave the broad avenue—the Boulevard de Sebastopol—evenly bisecting it. The Rue Montmartre, a busy, commercial street by day, assumes a strangely sinister aspect towards midnight. You are warned against the cabs, whose drivers solicit your custom. More than once the "fare" has found himself driven to some out-of-the-way spot, there to be surrounded by the cabman's accomplices and forced to part with everything of the least value on him. This is no imaginary peril. Only a few months before these lines were written, an American lady, well-known in Parisian musical circles, hailed a passing cab,

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and gave an address in the Parc Monceau quarter. Presently she noticed that the streets through which she was being driven were unfamiliar to her. She remonstrated with the driver, but he appeared not to hear her, and whipped up his horse. Soon the terrified lady found that she was being driven at a furious gallop along the outer boulevards. Her cries attracted the attention of a young workman, who jumped on to the step of the vehicle, but could not persuade the cabman to stop. He told the lady that her only chance was to jump, and this at last she did, escaping with a few scratches and a severe shaking. The cabman, seeing that his victim had eluded him, galloped his horse away into the darkness. An unpleasant experience truly! Now that lady travels only in motor-cabs belonging to the company.

You keep to the pavement, therefore, and at the corner of a side street notice a fairly decently-clad man sneaking along in a vaguely suspicious manner towards two typical ruffians of the apache variety. A minute later, and he rushes past you as if the devil were at his heels, as indeed he is in the person of the two apaches. Seeing he is about to escape them, they pick up two huge stones that happen to be lying there,

## In the Slums

and hurl them after his retreating form. Either of the missiles would have crushed his head to a pulp, but the fugitive, to your relief, gets clean away, the ruffians still in pursuit. You turn to a respectably-dressed lad at your elbow, and inquire the cause of these violent proceedings. He tells you that it is an *affaire entre voyous* ; that if the fugitive had been a respectable man or unjustifiably attacked, he would certainly have called for help. This sounds reasonable, and you recollect the man's suspicious movements at the corner of the street. Perhaps he had attempted to knife one of his rough-looking pursuers; perhaps they were three thieves who had fallen out, and he had robbed the others of their booty. A little farther on, some costermongers from the Halles are beguiling the time with horse-play. Their butt is a bloused *campagnard* with a huge basket on his arm. Every time his assailants make a feint to attack him, he puts the basket on the ground in order to defend himself; thereupon, one of the *voyous* kicks it into the road. When the old fellow goes to pick it up they push him into it. Rough-looking men and women standing round hold their sides and roar with laughter. The old fellow's wife appears on the scene, and remon-

## The Night Side of Paris

strates with his persecutors. While she is thus engaged, two buxom, frolicsome girls come along, pick up the basket, and run off with it. The old lady gives chase, comes up with the girls, and is about to seize them by the hair, when a policeman comes round the corner, and without inquiring into the cause of the disturbance conducts the poor old woman to the station. Her husband follows, offering explanations, and you leave the little crowd of spectators in high good-humour.

Wretched men and women pass you—veritable incarnations of misery and squalor. You seek the warmth and light of the Boulevard Sebastopol, and then plunge into Old Paris—the city of the Valois and early Bourbons. Somewhere near here is the house in which Henri Quatre died. The poverty-stricken lane which you are now traversing bears the name Rue Quincampoix. The name sounds familiar—of course, this was the street where Law had his offices, and enriched or made bankrupt half the financiers of Europe. Down this narrow court the stream of Pactolus once rushed in its greatest volume. The houses which were gorged with wealth amassed in a few hours, or by the hazard of the dice, now shelter a population in the ugliest,

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unspeakable stages of destitution. Oh, for a County Council to make short work of these foul dens!

The Rue de Venise seems consecrated rather to crime than to poverty, unless we do its worthy inhabitants an injustice. You will not care to pass down it at night unarmed or alone. On your right the narrow streets broadens somewhat before a drinking-shop where some curious types are assembled. A huge, bloated woman leans over the murderous-looking men, and calls their attention to the well-dressed stranger. They hurl an insult in their unintelligible *argot*, which it is prudent to ignore, and you pass on. The houses on each side are in total darkness, and you peer curiously into alleys, unilluminated by a single ray—alleys that seem to lead into bottomless pits and fathomless wells. Further on, a wretched prostitute seizes you by the arm and invites you to her lair. Even in broad daylight this species of traffic is openly carried on under the eyes of every passer-by. The women sit at their doors, awaiting clients, and reading the paper meanwhile. It would need the pen of a Zola to describe the scenes which anyone may witness through the open windows of the houses in the Rue de Venise.



## The Night Side of Paris

A wretched old man accosts you, "Deux sous, mon prince, pour le coucher!" You give him a coin and he creeps away down the Rue Beaubourg. He enters a house, filthy, tumble-down, diseased—if a building could be so described. It is a thieves' boarding-house, where food and shelter is provided them for five sous a day. You picture the sleeping-room with its myriad occupants, other than human, and shudder. You think of the decayed victuals, the sweepings of the markets, and you turn away with a sensation of nausea. You catch a glimpse of a gross old woman with a greasy face and a moustache. She is the proprietress, and it is said, a notorious "fence" or receiver of stolen goods. Probably her establishment proves no less profitable than Fradin's, despite its lower scale of charges.

You stumble on, your disgust increasing every moment, narrowly avoiding heaps of filth piled up on the pavements that no *chiffonnier* has thought it worth while to clear away. You can see the *chiffonniers* themselves at work in some of the basements; carefully going through the contents of their sacks and baskets, spread out before them. The most industrious, respectable and cleanly inhabitants of the quarter

## In the Slums

are these. Their industry is organised and they pay deference to an aged man, their *doyen*, now practically retired from business. Many of the streets are farmed out by the capitalists of the profession to their humbler brethren. You cannot get rid of the middle-man in France. They are a separate caste, these *chiffonniers*. They follow their trade from early childhood. Sometimes you see graceful young girls bending low beneath their baskets of rubbish, their beauty of form not wholly concealed by the rags they wear. In the early morning they see girls like themselves, driving past in the gay livery of the courtesan. What thoughts come into their minds then, and what grim sort of virtue is theirs that keeps them true to a purity linked with the dust-heap?

Tired with your exploration of the slums of Paris, you return to the comparative security of the Halles for rest and refreshment. It is not yet midnight, and the great markets are almost deserted. The carts from the country laden with vegetables come in slowly. At the first café you enter three burly, blood-stained meat porters are exchanging pleasantries with a trim young lady behind the bar, and the immaculately-dressed waiter. Over the door is

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the notice "Ouvert toute la nuit." There are more interesting places of entertainment close by which are not open till midnight. There is, for instance, the Ange Gabriel in the quaintly-named Rue Pirouette. Passing a fat old ogress, the proprietress of the house, you clamber upstairs and find yourself in the company of the lowest scum of Parisian rascality. They make an infernal din, singing, quarrelling and beating on the tables with their glasses. Some of the ruffians are entertaining themselves or others to the strains of crazy guitars and fiddles. The place reeks of alcohol and tobacco smoke. You will not be tempted to spend much time in examining the decorations of the apartment. They consist of a series of rude frescoes representing the Archangel Gabriel making a tour of Paris. He is shown taking part in the *quadrille excentrique* at the Moulin Rouge, in other attitudes less decorous, and assisting a courtesan to rob her sleeping paramour. At last you see him taking wing for Heaven, Paris having proved altogether too much for him. More in harmony with the tone of the establishment are the names of eminent decapitated criminals, inscribed by the hands of their admirers and imitators on the marble tables. While examin-

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ing these, you will be reminded by the *garçon* that he is awaiting your order; for such is the popularity of the Ange Gabriel that room can only be found for those who renew their *consommations*. Like the guardian angel of the place, you retreat disgusted and weary.

Another place of this sort, well worth seeing, is the *caveau* in the Rue des Innocents. On the ground floor as you enter is an ordinary bar. You ask for the "*caveau*," and a surly *garçon* with obvious reluctance murmurs "*En-bas*." You descend a narrow flight of stairs, and pause to decipher the usual inscriptions on the dirty plaster. "*Vive Ravachol!*" Ah! and the next—"Nenesse toujours à toi!" Your apache is capable of the tenderest passion for the lady whose labours raise him above the necessity of work. At the foot of the stairs another notice catches your eye. "Drinks must be paid for at the time they are served." You find yourself in a chamber divided into three by arches, strangely like a vault. You are right. This was a vault, and served formerly as a charnel-house. Three flaring gas-jets enable you to realise your surroundings. The den is furnished with rough wooden tables and benches, at which

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are seated as ugly a gang of hangdog-looking ruffians as you would care to see. At the foot of the stair you notice three well-dressed men in whispered conversation. They look at you suspiciously, and are presently joined by a ragged tramp, whom you noticed with surprise to be waiting in a cab outside. More whispers and the four withdraw. These three gentlemen seemed very much at home in these incongruous surroundings. You realise that these ruffianly types around you are often only the instruments of more highly-placed scoundrels. As no one interferes with you—for, of course, you have not come to visit the *caveau* dressed as if for an "At Home"—you advance and sit down. You order a bock and pay for it forthwith. The man next to you is too deeply engrossed in a love passage to heed the stranger. He throws his arms round the neck of the girl beside him, and kisses her passionately, almost savagely. This embrace having been repeated four or five times, the girl pushes him away, and calls for the *garçon*. She orders a bottle of *rouge* for her lover and herself, and of course pays for it. The ardent youth almost drains the bottle, then falls to kissing the girl again; in an interval between his caresses she raises her glass to her lips.

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He looks at it greedily, takes it away from her, drains it, and repeats his embraces.

From the brutes your attention is distracted by the sounds of the piano. It is played by a blind man—a singularly unpleasant and pathetic figure in this haunt of violence and villainy. He accompanies an odious-looking wretch, who trolls forth songs full of the joy and excitement of a “bandit’s” life. I have by me a copy of one of these curious ballads, of which I append a free translation:

“Last July I cracked a crib,  
Easy job it was to do ;  
Old girl alone, nigh seventy-two,  
But it was a blooming sell !  
Not a stiver in the place.  
The old girl looks me in the face,  
Says she, ‘Sir, the truth to tell,  
All I’ve got to offer—well  
—It’s my virtue.’  
‘Ma’am,’ says I, in a shocking fright,  
‘Thanks all the same. I’ll say good-night,  
Don’t let *me* pervert you !’”

This beautiful composition, relating to one of the numerous disappointments incident to a hard-working burglar’s career, never fails to elicit applause. It is indicative of the character of the audience. In the corner sit two policemen. Their presence, however, in no way interferes

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with the comfort and freedom of the gathering, and doubtless many crimes are planned here almost within hearing of the myrmidons of the law. It might well be asked why these resorts of criminals are tolerated. The most probable reason is that it is on the whole safer to get these dangerous and suspicious elements concentrated in one or two spots. It is likely enough that some of the roughest-looking specimens here are in the pay of the police. Big hauls are frequently made in these places. The police surround the house at a given moment, while a party, revolvers in their hands, enters and compels an instant surrender. Everybody is then conducted to the nearest *poste*, and all those who cannot give a thoroughly satisfactory account of themselves are detained. The bands which have their headquarters in such *caveaux* often own allegiance to some damsel like the notorious Casque d'Or, or, as in a very recent case, to a girl fifteen years of age.

On the whole, your Parisian criminal-of-all-work seems to lead a jollier life than his English *confrère*. Love and laughter relieve and sweeten his strenuous professional career, and, as has just been said, a thread of sentiment and

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romance may often be traced in his business dealings. Indeed if he is not working for some loved one, you may be quite sure that the loved one is working for him. "The feast, the revel, and the song" cheer him amid the vicissitudes of existence, and he likes to drain a loving cup with comrades, and to forget cares in the delirium of the dance. He respects the tradition of his ancient craft; and if he falls on the field of honour, his name is inscribed by his mourning friends on the walls or tables of the places of entertainment which he adorned with his presence during life. He is not wholly indifferent to the welfare of his country, though before all things devoted to his art. He takes an academic interest in the anarchist propaganda, but he does not allow his sympathies to interfere with the exercise of his profession. M. de M——— a well-known apostle of anarchy—from the platform—was only a few nights back waylaid by three apaches on his way from a meeting, whereat he had denounced the police as assassins and all authority as evil. Being a muscular man, he was able to put his assailants to flight, and shudders to think of the predicament in which he would have been placed had he been rescued by the police. It would



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have been no worse, I assured him, than his assailants'.

Leaving the *caveau* towards two o'clock in the morning, you find the Halles, which you had left silent and deserted, now surrounded and invaded by swarms of countryfolk, porters, costermongers and hangers-on of all kinds. The scene not unnaturally reminds you of Covent Garden. Here a group of white-capped women and blue-bloused men form a circle round two old peasants who are disputing the right to occupy a certain stand. A policeman pushes his way through the crowd, and settles the dispute to the apparent dissatisfaction of both. This trouble about the stands is perennial, and no regulation on the subject seems to have been regarded as final by any but the authorities. You recognise, mingled with these decent market-folk, certain patrons of the *cabarets* you have just quitted. They sneak behind the carts and sheds, ready to snatch a countryman's purse if they see before them a clear road to safety, or to knife any broker or well-to-do farmer they may surprise in some dark corner of the vast market. Fradin's presently disgorges some of its occupants. They whine piteously for jobs, and fight each other for the right to push a country-

## In the Slums

man's barrow, or to pick up the contents of his fallen basket. Children are here too, gazing wolfishly at the red meat and the succulent vegetables; alert and on the watch for fallen fruit; occasionally tripping up some weasened old hag, bent double beneath her load of apples. A swarm of bees, making honey for the great queen-bee, Paris.

Hard by is the café bearing the odd sign of the Chien qui Fume. Enter and you will find a motley crew indeed. You find women from the grand boulevards, who have had no luck to-night, and having spent their last louis at the Café Americain or the Olympia, have come on here to satisfy their hunger with onion soup or a bouillon. How ghastly they look in the pale morning light! The make-up is beginning to wear off, their eyes are unnaturally deep-sunken, their finery is disarrayed. They eat ravenously. They exchange jokes with a couple of journalists, who have just come off night-work. Looking fresher than *cocottes* or pressmen are the work-girls about to begin their long day. You are sorry to see these girls here, mingled with the low-class prostitutes of the district, who seat themselves by your side and order drinks for themselves in your name. You shake off these harpies, and go

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into the street. At the doors and windows the night-birds are stretching and yawning in every stage of undress. They rush out and accost you. You make a last halt before the Grand Comptoir, outside which a party of men in evening dress are turning round and round with repulsive drabs, in drunken imbecility. One man falls to the ground, the woman on top of him. The bystanders, for the most part, are too drunk to laugh. A couple of brisk young *campagnards* look on with derision. One of them produces a little live crab from beneath his blouse and slips it down the neck of one of the drunken "swells." The café vomits forth more of its occupants. A denizen of the Quartier Latin, with a Simian physiognomy, strums on a guitar, and sings in a cracked, hoarse voice. He is not so drunk as the others, and probably does this sort of thing because he thinks it Bohemian and picturesque. Villon, not to say Verlaine, lived after this fashion.

You turn with relief to the work-folk gathered round the open-air soup-kitchen at the corner of the street. You are reminded of our coffee-stalls. The night-birds begin to flit away; the student disappears in the direction of the Châtelet; policemen bundle the men in the



*“Voici le Soir!”*



## In the Slums

dirty shirt-fronts into cabs; neatly dressed *bonnes* appear with their baskets on their arms. The markets are open for the serious business of the day. To be gay to-night, Paris must be fed to-day.

## CHAPTER VII

### IN THE QUARTIERS POPULAIRES

WHILE for the outcast and destitute life is harder in Paris than in London, for the merely poor, and even for the very poor, it is decidedly pleasanter and brighter. The contrast between the two capitals is nowhere more striking than in the manner of life of their working classes. The Parisian *ouvrier* is more sociable than his British fellow, or, perhaps, it would be truer to say, he has many more opportunities of gratifying his social instincts. To begin with, he never lives in a tiny house of his own; he and all his family are thus forced, from the moment he sets up his *ménage*, into some sort of relation with other families. He has no "little bit of garden" to occupy his leisure; if he aims at respectability he does not think himself obliged in consequence to shut himself up in his house every Sunday afternoon and evening, and to sleep till bedtime. He is easily bored; so is his wife; so they readily seek the light and animation of the

## In the Quartiers Populaires

café. The English worker has his public-house, it is true, and it is just there that he, and his wife, more particularly, compare so unfavourably with our Parisian friends. The atmosphere of even the humblest café in a respectable quarter is distinctly more wholesome than that of the four-ale bar. The *cabaret* is only incidentally, the public-house is essentially a place for drinking. But it is difficult to write of the English public-house with patience. It is a nuisance, a thing in the way, that does not know it is not wanted. No one wants to sit on an uncomfortable stool against a zinc-covered bar emptying glasses of beer or whisky every ten minutes; you do this because this is the only sort of entertainment that you can obtain in a poor quarter of London. And then the saloon bar, with its exorbitant prices, its "horsey" atmosphere, the elderly supercilious barmaids, the corpulent proprietor with his arrogant air of patronage! It's enough to make teetotallers of us all.

The French workman is very far from being a teetotaller, but his wife is never a drunkard. As some other English writer has remarked, there appears to be no type in Paris corresponding to the elderly black-bonneted females whose



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a cheerful resort for the people. The knots at the corners are only composed of persons waiting for trams or omnibuses. As you cross the road you dodge a panting youth in the shorts of the professional runner; and you know that those strange apparitions which flit by us in our suburban streets are now no longer objects of curiosity in Paris. The young Parisian is keen on "training." His instincts of emulation has been aroused by the walking races which were of as frequent occurrence a year or two ago in Paris as in England. We still hear of "Marathons" from Rouen to Paris, etc., etc. No doubt this perspiring youth will soon be competing for the Belleville cup or the Prix des Abattoirs.

You mount the La Villette car, and continue your journey northwards. The streets are all much alike—they have little individuality in Paris. The same groups, at corners, the same loiterers on the seats, the same parties in the recesses of the cafés. But the scene becomes livelier. There is a queue outside a *cinéma* theatre, and children are gazing open-mouthed at a realistic presentment of the murder of Rizzio, explained by the subjoined announcement that "Marie Stuart: grand drame, en cinq actes," will be produced at that theatre every

## In the Quartiers Populaires

night at 8 p.m. The theatre is a low, wooden shed, approached by three steps. The director—a fat man, clean-shaven, stands at the door, smoking a cigar, exactly as managing directors are expected to do. The prices of admission put the legitimate drama within reach of the slenderest means. For a *loge* you pay five sous, but as it consists of a chair separated by a wooden partition, three feet high, from the rest of the auditorium, you don't feel that you are paying too little. In fact you are unpleasantly conscious that you must remind everyone who looks at you of a stalled ox or a pig in a poke, or any other creature specially segregated and fenced in. As to the tragedy, you know what to expect and you are not disappointed. The caste is composed of typical barn-stormers, who seem to form, as to their externals, a distinct and homogeneous race all the world over. The *rôle* of the unfortunate Italian is interpreted by a girl with a pretty face and shapely legs, and you notice her a good deal more than the elderly queen of Scots, who acts rather well. Happily the piece is not long in playing, for there is to be another performance at 9.30, and you are glad to escape, without having outraged the feelings of the artistes by a too early departure.

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Under the arches of the Métro., which is here carried over the roadway, a band of lads are playing in the darkness. Their quick stealthy movements, their vicious leaps upon each other, somehow remind you of the gambols of a pack of young wolves. As you emerge again into the light, your ears are assailed by the only too familiar braying of the steam-organ. One of the numerous *fêtes foraines* of Paris is in progress on the Boulevard de la Villette. For half a mile or more the middle of the roadway, as at Neuilly, is occupied by booths, stalls, and shows. The character of the entertainment differs not at all from what you have seen at the larger fair, except that everything is on a less pretentious scale. There is no switchback-railway, for instance. The people are of course of the roughest type. The men wear blouses and peaked caps for the most part, and to judge from the ugly stains on their garments, some have evidently come from the great slaughter-houses hard by. The fair keeps them all in a good-temper, and some of the most villainous-looking of the pleasure-seekers are leading their children by the hand, intent on giving them an evening's amusement. Quaint children they are, with close-shaven heads, black blouses tied round



**Sweethearts.**



## In the Quartiers Populaires

the middle, and socks hardly reaching to the calf. The little girls are all in costumes of check or plaid, the pattern dear to the French *ouvrière's* heart. The elder girls are all of the factory-hand type, and among them you see some uncommonly pretty faces. They all, at least, are lit up by expression—so often absent from the faces of women in a certain other country. These girls are nearly always attended by their swains, many of them the typical apaches of whose doings the papers are full. As the scene presents no new features, you board an electric car and enter into conversation with the conductor. He is less reserved and taciturn than are most of his brethren in Paris. The officials in this city do not show much readiness to enter into conversation with strangers. You begin by asking if this fair is of frequent occurrence at La Villette.

“Yes, one hundred days out of the three hundred and sixty-five.”

“It must be rather a nuisance,” you suggest.

“*En effet*. But it amuses the apaches.”

“Ah! the apaches! They are numerous hereabouts?”

“Oh, as to that, no more numerous here

## The Night Side of Paris

than in other quarters. You must not believe all they say in the papers about the apaches. There are criminals in every city — Paris, London, Berlin, I'll wager. It's all the same."

"Quite so. Then you don't think you run any more risk walking the streets of La Villette by night than elsewhere?"

"Well, it's like \this. There's a certain proportion of criminals everywhere. You admit that? Well, here there are not more than twenty per cent. at the outside."

"But, *mon ami*, that's a sufficiently formidable proportion!"

"*Enfin*. But all these stabbings that you read about—these are *entre amis*, you understand. They quarrel about a girl, and a knife is drawn out, and there you are. You are a stranger. You leave them alone and they will leave you alone."

"But you don't mean to tell me that the apaches never attack strangers?"

"Well, they do sometimes. There are plenty of men on this boulevard who would cut your throat for four sous. The thing is to carry a good revolver. They would attack us tram-car conductors if we were not armed."

## In the Quartiers Populaires

“ Well, from what you tell me, the reports in the papers appear to be justified.”

Your informant collects a fare, pulls the bell—you are now at the Place Blanche—and becomes more philosophical in tone. “ These apaches,” he remarks, “ they are *fainéants*.”

You agree, and ask him if he can explain how it is that crimes of violence seem to be on the increase in Paris, and that the police are unable to prevent them. He shrugs his shoulders. He has no theory. He refuses to believe that Paris is more criminal than any other city. “ La guillotine fera du bien,” he presently remarks.

“ What about military service—doesn’t that do these young blackguards any good?” you inquire.

No, he doesn’t think so, they come out of the *caserne* worse than they went in.

Place Clichy! The square is alive with light and bustle. People are swarming out of the Metropolitan Station, eager to forget dull care in the joyous *cabarets* of the Butte. But to-night you have armed yourself with triple brass against these seductions, and continue your journey towards the Trocadero. The Rue de Courcelles is quiet, the Avenue Kléber quieter. The Trocadero is shrouded in darkness. You



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walk some distance along the embankment in the direction of the Place de l'Alma, and pass only two policemen and a Versailles tram. So you avail yourself of the ever-convenient Metro., and alight at the station Edgard Quinet, near the Gare Montparnasse.

Here things are more lively. At the corner of the Avenue du Maine is a well-patronised café. You are speedily driven out of it by the braying of a gramophone, to which the workmen and their girls listen with delight. You are now in a popular quarter of a more respectable character than La Villette or Ménilmontant. By the side of the café runs down a little street called Rue de la Gaité. It is appropriately named. One side of it appears (except for a police-station) to be made up exclusively of cafés and bars, and on the other you have the locally famous Bobino music-hall, the *cinéma* theatre of the Mille Colonnnes, and—more cafés. If it is a Saturday night all these places will be well patronised. In a little café-bar two smartly-dressed young girls are amusing themselves at the expense of a hunchback—a boy of seventeen or so. (You will have noticed by now that cripples and hunchbacks are very often met with in Paris.) They pin his arms behind his back, and ask him

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if he would like to kiss them. His reply is unflattering, but his persecutors are not malicious, and after boxing his ears rather smartly, release him with a present of ten sous to buy a drink with. One of the two remains in the café, the other hurries down the street. She is an attractive girl, not more than sixteen, and you have half a mind to invite her to accompany you to the Bobino. She glances at the well-dressed stranger, but she crosses the street, and is joined by a vicious-looking young ruffian, with whom, arms interlocked, she disappears down a side alley. Feeling a little mortified, you turn into the Bobino. You pay 1 fr. 25 c., and are installed in a *loge*. The hall is crowded entirely with the working people. The *loges* on each side of you are occupied by stout, red-faced men—foremen and such-like—in blouses and caps. Some of them have a countrified air, and may have come up from the adjacent western railway terminus. They are a jolly set of men, who smoke pipes and laugh loudly. The women with them—probably their lawful spouses—are innocent of headgear. So are the factory girls who fill the “*fauteuils*” and stalls. As to the show, it is just a fifth-rate imitation of that you have witnessed at the leading halls on the

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boulevards. There are the usual eccentric comedians, generally extremely attenuated young men, with grotesque clothes, red noses and cauliflower wigs. Their songs are chock-full of political allusions, and as is always the case in France, if the audience don't agree with the sentiments expressed, they don't hesitate to say so. Then there is a *revue*, which seems mainly an exhibition of the legs and bosoms of the women taking part in it. They are far from attractive.

An hour of this and you will be sufficiently bored. Your next halt will be the café concert de la Gaité, almost next door. On entering, your nostrils are assailed by a strong odour of oranges and tobacco-smoke. The audience is perhaps rather more mixed than at the Bobino, and in the *fauteuils* a degree more select. The small tradesmen of the district bring their wives here on Saturday and Sunday nights. The audience is appreciative and enthusiastic. A popular singer is encored again and again, and a good chorus repeated with deafening energy. As in English music-halls of a corresponding order, appeals to the patriotism of the audience are never without effect. The Théâtre Montparnasse next door similarly caters

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for the lower bourgeoisie. The favourite dramas there are *The Lyons Mail*, the *Corsican Brothers*, and others of our Surrey or Princess's type. The plays conform, in fact, to the standards of the uneducated playgoer in all lands. It is the old silly tale of persecuted virtue and vice triumphant till about 11.45 p.m., when it invariably meets with swift and terrible retribution. In the French theatres of this class that I am familiar with, it is only fair to say that the absurdities and imbecile sentimentality of our suburban theatres would not be tolerated. I have not seen, for instance, overfed angels in ballet-skirts surrounding the bed of the dying child, who is presently dragged up to Heaven by an ingenious contrivance of wires. But of course the French are not penetrated with that deep religious sentiment which so profoundly influences society in Walham Green and Holloway.

The dance which enters hardly at all into the life of the English workman is one of the chief delights of the Parisian toiler. Acquaintances are made and continued, and courtships begun at the *bals de quartier*. But they appear to be losing their hold on the people, little by little. The music-hall begins to attract them with its

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coarse jests, its inane vulgarities, its smoke-laden atmosphere, its facilities for drinking. The Rue de la Gaité once resounded to "the clang of the clog and hob-nailed boot" on the floor of the hall of the Mille Colonnes. Now that has been turned into a *cinéma* theatre.

"Where do the people of the quartier dance now?" you ask a policeman.

"Not many of the dancing halls on the Rive Gauche are left," he replies. There is the Bal Breton, which might interest us. Where is that? In a side street off the Avenue du Maine. It is of no use to go there now. It is only open on Sunday afternoons. It is worth seeing, continues the policeman; there congregate the Bretons working in Paris to meet the girls of their own *pays*, who resume their distinctive caps and ornaments. "On y parle Breton même!" This sounds interesting, but this is not Sunday afternoon. But there are the *bals musettes*. For those we must cross the Boul' Mich', and search in the streets running into the Rue Montagne Ste. Geneviève. On the way, we may recall what M. Montorgueil (that inimitable portrayer of Parisian types) has said about the patrons of these dances:

"The Auvergnat, who follows the rudest,



Dancing at the *Barrières*.



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simplest sort of callings in Paris, comes to the city only in the hope of one day leaving it. Water-carrier—in the days when water was not laid on to every floor—commissionaire, coal-heaver, glazier, errand-boy, roast-chestnut seller, he remains true to his mountains. He works hard and does not shrink from the severest toil, in such a hurry is he to find the wherewithal to return and to live comfortably in his beloved *pays*. We hear a great deal about the southerner's attachment to his native soil—especially from the southerner himself, who knows how to make a noise. How much deeper, if discreeter, is the love of the Auvergnat for his village steeple! He may change his habits as the necessities of his situation dictate; he may borrow something in appearance or manner from his neighbours; he may seem to be assimilated, but he remains an Auvergnat in accent, in taste, in manners. He refuses to embrace the habits of a world which is not his. There are country-folk who lose all their local colour, who become people from nowhere in particular and everywhere in general. But when you belong to St Flour, it's for ever. The Auvergnat remains the child of Auvergne. If he settles down elsewhere, it is only for the sake of his children, who could not



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in the *pays* receive the education he thinks worthy of them, or find the position which his sound simple pride thinks fitted for them. But if he is single, or when the children are launched, his one desire is to return to the Cantal or Puy-de-Dôme whence he came. All the years he has had but one ambition in his head—to buy with his hard-earned savings a certain field that he knows of, in the shade of the chestnut trees.”

These honest, home-sick folk find it their chiefest delight in exile to gather together, and as far as possible recreate the atmosphere of home. Of the Parisian they speak contemptuously as the *Parigot*. They love, above all, to dance to the sound of their native instrument, the *musette*, a member of the great bagpipe family, everywhere dear to the true children of Pan and Faunus. These *bals musettes* at one time multiplied exceedingly, and were regarded with suspicion by the authorities. There were fights —“ As if between Auvergnats a punch on the nose, more or less, was of any consequence!” and all sorts of bad characters slipped in among the simple rustic merry-makers. So a great many of the dances were suppressed, but there are still two or three dozen or more in Paris, none of them very easy to find.

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A lad of some sixteen or seventeen summers enlightens us. He knows several *bals musettes*. He will conduct us to one—*très honnête*—in fact, as a guarantee of its complete respectability, he adds that he frequents it himself. He leads us through tortuous alleys and side streets, as if determined we should never find the place again without his assistance, and at last halts before a dingy little *débit de vins*. He motions us to enter and follows. On our left is a small bar, at which preside the proprietor and his wife, stout bovine-looking persons, obviously of peasant origin. We offer our guide a glass of red wine, and each take one ourselves. For this refreshment we pay at the modest rate of a penny a glass. Yet the wine is very much better than the *vin ordinaire* of the restaurants. We turn from the bar to the open door beyond, through which we enter a low-ceiled room lit by four or five naked gas-jets. This is the dancing saloon. On a platform at the far end two men are playing a lively but quaint-sounding polka on a piano and a squeaky fiddle. At the most only ten couples are dancing. We examine these folk attentively. There is not much about them by which they could be distinguished from the native-born Parisian

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workman and work-girl. The men are in blouse and casquette, or in still more ordinary costume and bowler hats. The girls, with their dark olive skins, jet black hair and flashing eyes, more clearly betray their southern origin. Here we don't see the girls dancing in couples—the lads are too gallant to allow that. For one girl in a bright crimson blouse there is keen competition, and a dispute between two gentlemen as to their right to the next dance with her. However, the question is amicably settled, and *mademoiselle* promises to dance with her swains in succession. The dance stops. The dancers seat themselves at the tables at one end of the room and fetch their own drinks. They pay little attention to the strangers, and the girl in the red blouse shyly drops her eyes when she finds them looking at her. The two *agents de police*, however, are greatly interested in us. "You come as visitors?" one of them asks. "Well, not to dance, *assurément*." Then we ask them if all the people we see here are Auvergnats. Not all, not, in fact, more than half; but all are practically *méridionaux*, from Limousin, Toulouse, and Bordeaux. Do they ever give any trouble? Never; *ce sont des gens paisibles*. Why are they not playing the *musette*? Well,

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it is not often played now. If the Auvergnats are in the majority, they sometimes clamour for it. Will the officers take any refreshment? Well . . . here it does not matter. So each takes a glass of wine, and then begins to question us about England and the English, which is annoying as we want to talk about the Auvergnats. Presently another dance begins. Now we observe that a young man with a bag slung from his shoulder levies toll of one penny on every couple for every dance. And we note, also, that the girls beg their friends to treat them to a dance as the girls at the Tabarin beg for drinks. This dance is something quite outside our experience. The men emphasise every step by tapping their heels on the floor, and this accompaniment quite drowns the squeak of the fiddle. The whole scene is lively, homely, and picturesque, reminding one very much of some old-time harvesters' dance in the barn. It is difficult to understand why, if all the *bals musettes* were like this, they should have been frowned upon by the authorities.

Perhaps they were confounded with such dances as the Bal Octobre, not far off, where the street-walkers of the outer boulevards meet their bullies and entertain them with their earnings. I understand that the gentlemen do not allow

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strangers to address the ladies in their presence. That sort of thing, they rightly consider, should be confined to business hours. You meet the same gentry at the other *bals de barrière*, in the Avenue de Choisy, at Aubervilliers, and the Rue des Gravilliers. When you have seen one of these functions you have seen all; and outwardly, of course, except for the phrenologist, there is nothing to distinguish the *souteneur* and the thief from the ordinary and comparatively honest workman in beret and blouse.

It is at the Eden Palace, near the Place de la République, that you find the most varied assortment of Parisians. The charge for admission—one franc and a half for gentlemen, half a franc for ladies—excludes the lowest type of *voyou*; but you see a good many among the dancers, whom you cannot help thinking would have done better by spending even these modest sums on food or raiment. The men in the body of the hall seem to belong to the working class; the girls are of the same order, many of them not having troubled to don hats for the occasion. But prowling round the floor, scanning “the wall-flowers” with an eye to business, are the inevitable ubiquitous *cocottes*—not indeed the *cocottes* of the grand boulevards, but pro-

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professionals all the same. It is to them that the ball owes the extreme animation which distinguishes it towards midnight, when a great deal of high-kicking is indulged in. The *bonniches*, or domestics, frequent the Salle Wagram on the other side of Paris. They present a curious study of high life below stairs. Dressed in the cast-off garments of some *grande dame*, they cannot borrow her *air*, and they have nothing of the smartness of our English chambermaids. The French don't know how to dress their servants, and the servants don't know how to dress themselves. The men are also *gens de maison* for the most part, and some of them even venture to appear in evening dress. As might be expected, a certain awkward decorum prevails at the Salle Wagram, and the most fashionable dances are quickly introduced here. It would be worth while comparing this dance with those frequented by our servants round about the Edgware Road, which I regret never to have had the opportunity of doing. Mingling with the *femmes de chambre* are any number of *cocottes*, probably recruited from their ranks. Still, on the whole, these good people conduct themselves very well, and one is glad to see that the restraints of domestic service

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have not extinguished their native Gallic gaiety.

Every trade, every association, political or otherwise, has its annual or quarterly dance. The Lyre Amicale des Batignolles, l'Union Fraternelle des Charbonniers et des Marchands de Coke, La Confraternité des Laveurs de Chiens, La Société Républicaine des Abattoirs, Les Enfants de Mars, Les Chiffonniers Royalistes, La Concorde des Maquereaux, the Syndicat des Marchands de Marrons Rôtis, all have their balls, which are, in some cases, like the hair-dressers' the occasion of an exhibition of professional skill. The waiters' dance is the only one where all the gentlemen wear evening dress. The dance of the carpenters is attended with the observance of certain traditional customs. Candidates are admitted into their society with secret rites and rough handling. Then comes the banquet and the dance. No dress coats here; the men wear their blue velveteens, their wide trousers brought in at the ankle, their velvet berets. "Among other usages, they have preserved their antique dances, certain of these being danced by men only, with the stiff majesty of the court of Louis Quatorze." They are a fine body of men, these carpenters, in whom,

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remarks Georges Montorgueil, "professional gymnastics has developed with the muscles the sense of rhythm in the attitude and exact nobility in movement."

But the festival *par excellence* of the Parisians, as of all good Frenchmen, is the glorious 14th July. Then the reign of liberty is commemorated by outbursts of rejoicing, by fraternal minglings of rich and poor. The tricolour waves over every public building, the tricoloured cockade is worn by all good patriots. The red, white and blue predominate in all the decorations, which are often on an elaborate and tasteful scale. In all the squares and the principal thoroughfares there is dancing. The Boulevard de la Madeleine, the Place de la Nation, the Place de la République are vast ball-rooms. Policemen with unbuttoned tunics join hands with apaches who change hats with them; a thief's mistress is seen capering wildly in the arms of the soldier, who crowns her with his képi; maires and adjoints with their official scarves, kick up their heels amid the throng, kiss the *blanchisseuses* and *ouvrières*, and fraternise with all the *mauvais sujets* in the *arrondissement*. It is our feast of Mafeking all over again. A rare day this for making acquaintances, for the



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beginning of love affairs! You get a chance in the quadrille of speaking to that girl in the house opposite, whom you have been eyeing for the last eleven months. The pretty demoiselle at the post-office whom you are afraid to ask for a stamp, smiles on you now when you ask her for a waltz. And though you, who wear a silk hat and a collar every day of your life and earn 1500 francs a year as ledger clerk to a well-known firm of mouse-trap manufacturers, could not dream of speaking to the *bonne* next door on other occasions, you feel it is not inconsistent with your dignity to pinch her cheeks and to kiss her on the glorious 14th of July. In doing so, of course, you run a risk of offending the stalwart baker's boy from the corner. In fact, you may find yourself rolling in the dust at his feet. No matter, you pick yourself up, and presently drink the health of each other and of the republic at the adjoining *estaminet*. No blood has been shed. You are better off than in the next boulevard, where a man just now was stabbed to the heart by a rival. Well, well, they have carried away the body (the Morgue is close handy), and there is plenty of sand at the foot of the Venetian masts to mop up the blood. "On with the dance, let joy be uncon-

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finéd." *Vive la République ! Vive la France ! Vive les braves gens !* Marianne, bold, free, laughing-eyed, stalks the streets incarnate. And you dance on the levelled stones of the Bastille and tread the relics of despotism underfoot.

It may or may not be improper to remark that these festivals have a favourable effect on the birth-rate. So France gains all round.

The professional vendor of love is not much in evidence on the 14th July. Or, at least, she throws off her livery and mingles with the crowd like any *ouvrière*. Perhaps she seizes the occasion to visit her friends and family *en province*. When everybody has tired themselves out with dancing, you may see a few of the sisterhood, it is true, evidently just risen from their beds, at the Place Blanche or Place Clichy. They dance with each other, repulsing the overtures of the other sex disdainfully and disgustedly. It is a holiday. In the Place de l'Opéra again, the *danseuses* of Montmartre sometimes exhibit their peculiar talents free of all charge, as good patriots on such an occasion should. The Opéra itself, has its *bal - masqué*. It is one of the time-honoured institutions of the capital, but it is shorn, like the *mi-carême fêtes*, of its

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real splendour and jollity. Do you ever see any real Parisians there? It is to be doubted. English, Americans, Germans, flock there. It is asserted that many of the *habitués* are paid to come by the organisers. The great La Goulue and Grille d'Egoût did not disdain the ball. The mixed character of the assembly has been the subject of stories and jokes innumerable, none of them differing from the anecdotes related of every other big masked ball.



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